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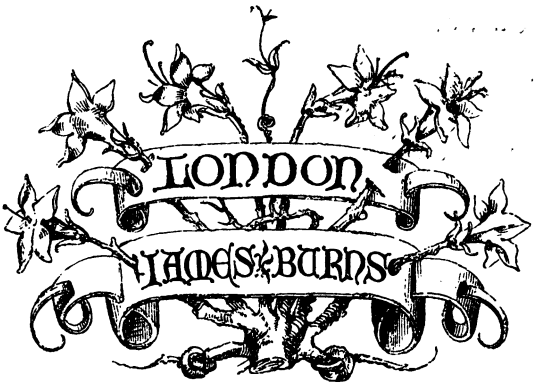
p. 72.

**WILLIAM TELL.**

# William Tell.

From the German of

Johann Christoph, von Friedrich Schiller.

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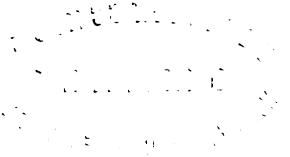

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PRINTED BY ROBSON, LEVEY, AND FRANKLYN,
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# Dramatis Personae.

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HERMANN GESSLER, *Governor of Switz and Uri.*
WERNER, *Baron of Attinghausen, free noble of Switzerland.*
ULRICH VON RUDENZ, *his Nephew.*

WERNER STAUFFACHER,
CONRAD HUNN,
HANS AUF DER MAUER,
JORG IM HOFE,
ULRICH DER SCHMIDT,
JOST VON WEILER,
ITEL REDING,
*People of Switz.*

WALTER FÜRST,
WILHELM TELL,
RÖSSELMANN, *the Priest,*
PETERMANN, *Sacristan,*
KUONI, *Herdsman,*
WERNI, *Huntsman,*
RUODI, *Fisherman,*
*of Uri.*

ARNOLD OF MELCHTHAL,
CONRAD BAUMGARTEN,
MEYER VON SARNEN,
STRUTH VON WINKELRIED,
KLAUS VON DER FLUE,
BURKHART AM BUHEL,
ARNOLD VON SERVA,
*of Unterwald.*

PFEIFER OF LUCERNE.
KUNZ OF GERSACE.
JENNI, *Fisherman's son.*
SEPPI, *Herdsman's son.*
GERTRUDE, *Stauffacher's wife.*
HEDWIG, *wife of Tell, daughter of Fürst.*
BERTHA OF BRUNECK, *a rich heiress.*

ARMGART,
MECHTHILD,
ELSBETH,
HILDEGARD,
*Peasant women.*

WALTER, WILHELM, } *Tell's sons.*
FRIESSHARDT, LEUTHOLD, } *Soldiers.*
RUDOLPH DER HARRAS, *Gessler's master of the horse.*
JOHANNES PARRICIDA, *Duke of Suabia.*
STUFFI, *Overseer.*
THE MAYOR OF URI.
A COURIER.
MASTER STONEMASON, COMPANIONS, AND WORKMEN.
TASKMASTER.
A CRIER.
MONKS OF THE ORDER OF CHARITY.
HORSEMEN OF GESSLER AND LANDENBERG.
MANY PEASANTS; MEN AND WOMEN FROM THE WALDSTETTEN.

# William Tell.

## ACT I. Scene I.

*High rocky shore of the Lake of Lucerne, over against Switz. The lake forms a bay in the land. A hut is not far from the shore. A fisher-boy guides a boat across the lake. Beyond the lake are seen the green meadows, villages, and farms of Switz, lying in the bright sunshine. To the left rise the heights of the Hacken, covered with clouds; to the right, in the distance, are seen the glaciers. Before the curtain is drawn up, the Ranz des Vaches is heard, and the musical tinkling of the cattle-bells, which sounds for some time after the opening of the scene.*

THE FISHER-BOY (*sings*).

(*Air of the Ranz des Vaches.*)

Brightly is sparkling the lake's clear tide,
The youth is asleep on its verdant side;
A murmur of music
Breathes soft where he lies,
As the voices of angels
In paradise.

Hark! as he wakes from his dreamless rest
The crisping waves play over his breast.
A gentle whisper
Is heard from the deep:
Belovèd, that resteth
In dreamless sleep,
Follow me—haste to my crystal cell,
Come to the caves where the sea-nymphs dwell!

SHEPHERD (*on the mountains*).

(*Variation of the Ranz des Vaches.*)

Farewell, ye meadows!
The flowers are strewn,
The flocks are scattered,
The summer is gone

We depart to the mountains, we come again
When the woods are filled with the cuckoo's strain;
When the flowers of the earth are glad and gay,
And the brooks flow clear in the laughing May.
Farewell, ye meadows!
The flowers are strewn,
The flocks are scattered,
The summer is gone!

CHAMOIS-HUNTER (*appears on the height of a rock*).

(*2d variation.*)

The thunder sweeps by with fear, with wrath,
But the hunter treads his mountain path:
O'er the fields of ice
He strides along;
There reigneth no spring,
There breathes no song:

A misty sea is beneath his feet,
His gaze no dwelling of man may greet.
The beautiful world
Lies veiled, unseen,
With its fairy flowers,
Its robes of green;
Unseen, save when from beneath his eye
For a moment the shadows of mist roll by.

[*The landscape changes. A hollow sound is heard from the mountains; shadows of clouds pass over the ground.*

RUODI *the fisherman comes from his hut;* WERNI *the hunter descends from the cliff;* KUONI *the shepherd enters with his milk-pail on his shoulder;* SEPPI, *his attendant, follows him.*

RUODI.

Haste, Jeuni, to the shore. The Thalvogt[1] hangs
Heavy and low—a dull and hollow sound
Comes from the Firn.[2] The Myttenstein[3] puts on
Its veil of darkening clouds, and cold the wind
Blows from the Wetterloch.[4] A storm is brooding:
An hour, and 'twill be here.

[1] A sort of mist.
[2] That part of the mountains where the ice begins.
[3] A tall rock bordering on the lake.
[4] Opening between two hills through which the weather is said to come.

KUONI.

There cometh rain:
My herds crop eagerly the grass; the dogs
Look round with gaze disturbed, scratching the earth.

WERNI.

The fish leap in the air—the waterfowl
Dive in the lake: a storm draws on apace.

KUONI (*to the boy*).

Have a care yonder, Seppi; look you well
That the cattle do not stray.

SEPPI.

My ear doth catch
The sound of Lissel's bells.

KUONI.

Then are the rest
Not far—she is always first of the herd.

RUODI.

'Tis a fine yoke of bells.

WERNI.

But not so fine
As the neck that bears them.—Are these cattle yours?

KUONI.

No—I am not so rich; they are my lord
Of Attinghausen's.

RUODI.

See yonder heifer;
How well the ribbon-band adorns her neck.

KUONI.

She knows it too; were I to take it off
She would not eat. It is her badge, she knows,
And gives her title to be first of the flock.

RUODI.

What?—a creature without sense or reason!

WERNI.

But animals have reason; we huntsmen
Know they have. With what well-ordered care
They range themselves as they go to the pastures;—
One, as a sentinel, first, who pricks his ears,
And warns of the approach of the huntsman.

RUODI (*to the shepherd*).
Are you going homewards?

KUONI.
Yes, for there is now
No pasture on the Alps.

WERNI.
A safe return
And prosperous journey to you!

KUONI.
And you:
Not every one goes over twice the road you take.

RUODI.
See yonder man approaching at full speed!

WERNI.
I know him—it is Baumgarten of Alzel.

CONRAD BAUMGARTEN (*out of breath*).
For God's sake, ferryman, unmoor your boat!

RUODI.
Why? what is your errand?—what need is there
Of so much haste?

BAUMGARTEN.
Unmoor your boat, so you
Would rescue me from death! Set me across!

KUONI.
Why, friend?—what ails you?

WERNI.
Who is pursuing you?

BAUMGARTEN (*to the fisherman*).
Oh, quick, for the love of heaven!—they are close
Upon my heels. The horsemen of the governor
Are in pursuit of me. I'm lost if they
Lay hands upon me.

RUODI.
Why do they follow you?

BAUMGARTEN.
Oh, save me first, for heaven's sake!—you shall then
Know all.

WERNI.
What have you done?—you are stained with blood!

BAUMGARTEN.
The emperor's seneschal at Rossberg.

KUONI.
What! is it Wolfenschiessen who pursues you?

BAUMGARTEN.
*He* can ne'er harm me more—I have slain him!

ALL (*starting from him*).
God shew you mercy, then! what have you done?

BAUMGARTEN.
What every free man would do. I have kept
My sacred hearth inviolate: he sought
To wrong my honour and my wife's.

KUONI.
Has he dared
So foul a deed?

BAUMGARTEN.
That he did not complete
His wicked purpose, God and my good axe
Be thanked!

WERNI.
So, with your axe you cleft his scull?

KUONI.
Quick, while the boat is being loosed from shore,
Let us hear all—you need not lose a moment.

BAUMGARTEN.
In anguish as of death my wife came to me
While I was felling wood in the forest:
The Governor was at my house; a bath
He had bidden her prepare; then he offered
Some offence 'gainst her woman's dignity,
Proving the wrong he purposed towards us both.
She escaped, and fled to me. Quick to the spot
I ran, armed as I was: and now—his bath
May wash away the stain of his blood and crime!

WERNI.
You did well—not a man would blame the deed.

KUONI.
Tyrant that he was! He is punished now
According to his merits. He has long
Deserved as much from the men of Unterwalden.

BAUMGARTEN.

The deed was public, done in the open day.
I am pursued. O God, even while we speak
The time will have gone by! [*It begins to thunder.*

KUONI.

Quick, ferryman!
Set him across.

RUODI.

You cannot go; a heavy storm
Is approaching—you must wait.

BAUMGARTEN.

Holy God!
I cannot wait, there's death in every moment
Of delay.

KUONI (*to the fisherman*).

Trust in the help of God, and help
Your neighbour; so that when you need succour,
If such time come, you may receive it.
[*Howling of the storm, and thunder.*

RUODI.

The Fohn[1]
Is loose: look how the lake heaves! I dare not
Steer in the face of such a storm.

BAUMGARTEN (*falls on his knees*).

May God
Have mercy on you as you shew it me!

WERNI.

'Tis for his life!

KUONI.

He has a home,—a wife
And children. [*Repeated claps of thunder.*

RUODI.

Have I not a life to lose
As well as he? Am I not a husband
And a father? Look how the waves of the lake
Rise and heave as with a whirlpool! Willingly
Would I save him, but it is impossible;
You may see that it is.

[1] A wind peculiar to Switzerland.

BAUMGARTEN (*still upon his knees*).

And must I fall
Into my enemies' hands, within sight
Of refuge? See! I can reach it with my eyes,
The sound of my voice even can reach ashore.
The boat which might bear me across is here,
And must I stay without help, in despair?

KUONI.

Who comes yonder?

WERNI.

It is Tell of Bürglen.

TELL (*with a cross-bow*).

What man is that, imploring aid?

KUONI.

A man
Of Alzel, who, in defence of his honour,
Has slain the royal seneschal at Rossberg:
The horsemen of the Governor pursue him;
He prays the ferryman for a passage,
Who, fearful of the storm, will venture not.

RUODI.

Tell knows as well as I do how to guide
A rudder: he will tell you if the lake
Is fordable in such a storm as this.

[*Frequent claps of thunder; the lake swells up.*

Think you I'll plunge into such an abyss?
No one in his senses would.

TELL.

A brave man
Thinks of himself the last: we should trust in God,
And succour them that are in need.

RUODI.

In port,
From peril safe, 'tis easy to give counsel.
There is the boat, and there the lake; try it.

TELL.

It is possible the lake may have mercy,
Not that the Governor should; try, boatman.

SHEPHERD *and* HUNTSMAN.

Ah, save him, save him—for the love of heaven!

RUODI.

Were it my brother or my child, I could not.
To-day is the festival of Jude; the lake
Thirsts for its victim.

TELL.

Nothing by vain words
Will be accomplished: the time is short,
The hour presses on; the man must have help.
Speak! is it your purpose to grant it him?

RUODI.

No, not I.

TELL.

In God's name, then, give me the oars,
And with what skill I have I will attempt
The passage.

KUONI.

Brave Tell!

WERNI.

Worthy a huntsman!

BAUMGARTEN.

You are my saviour, my good angel, Tell!

TELL.

From the power of the tyrant I can save you;
God, and not I, must save you from the storm.
Better to fall into the hands of God
Than man's. [*To the shepherd.*] Comfort my wife, if aught befall me;
Tell her I've done what I could not leave undone.
[*He jumps into the boat.*

KUONI (*to the fisherman*).

You have sounded the lake oft; could not you
Venture what Tell has done so confidently?

RUODI.

Bolder men than I would not imitate Tell:
There's not another like him on the hills.

WERNI (*ascending the rock*).

They are afloat—God help them! Ha! the skiff
Struggles with the waves.

KUONI (*from the shore*).

The flood has swallowed her—

I cannot see her—ha! there she is again!
With powerful hand he guides her gently
Through the waves.

SEPPI.

Here are the Governor's horsemen!

KUONI.

By heaven, 'tis true! Tell's help came just in time.

*A troop of* LANDENBERG'S *horsemen enters.*

FIRST HORSEMAN.

The murderer came this way—you know where he is.

SECOND HORSEMAN.

He came this way—tell us where he is gone;
Attempt to mislead us at your peril.

KUONI *and* RUODI.

Of whom do you speak?

FIRST HORSEMAN (*seeing the boat*).

Death! what do I see?

WERNI (*above*).

Is it he in the boat you are in search of?
If you are quick, perchance you may yet catch him.

SECOND HORSEMAN.

Curses upon him! he has escaped.

FIRST HORSEMAN (*to the fisherman and shepherd*).

You helped him to escape—
You shall suffer for it. Fall on their herds!
Down with their huts! burn, slay whate'er you find!

[*Exeunt horsemen.*

SEPPI (*rushes after them*).

My lambs!

KUONI.

My herds!

WERNI.

Tyrants!

RUODI (*wrings his hands*).

Justice of heaven!
When shall our country find a deliverer?

[*He follows them.*

## Scene II.

*Steinen in Switz. A lime-tree before* Stauffacher's *house, close to the road, near a bridge.*

Werner Stauffacher *and* Pfeifer *of Lucerne.*

*They enter, talking together.*

PFEIFER.

Ha! take my word, Stauffacher,
Swear no allegiance to Austria—
Stand firm and faithful to your country's cause:
God will protect you and your ancient freedom!
[*He presses his hand warmly, and is about to go.*

STAUFFACHER.

Yet wait to greet the mistress of my house;
You are my guest in Switz—I yours in Lucerne.

PFEIFER.

I thank you; but to-day I must reach Gersau.
Whatever evils you may have to endure
From the pride or avarice of those above you,
Bear patiently! All things may suffer change—
Another emperor may rule this realm;
But having once declared yourselves for Austria,
You are hers for ever. [*Exit.*

Stauffacher *seats himself sorrowfully upon a bank under the lime-tree.* Gertrude, *his wife, finds him there. She sits down by his side, and looks at him for a long time in silence.*

GERTRUDE.

Tell me, my husband, why art thou so sad?
For many days in silence I have watched
The lines of care that gathered on thy brow:
Upon thy heart some silent grief is lying.
Ah, trust in me: I am thy own true wife,
And I would share thy every grief with thee.
[Stauffacher *takes her hand, and is silent.*
What cause of sorrow weighs upon thy breast?—
Blest is thy industry; thy fortune prospers;
Thy barns well filled; numerous thy flocks and herds;
Thy steeds of choicest kind, and nurtured well,
Are brought to winter from the mountains home

To their peaceful stalls. Yonder your house
Stands, rich as an old ancestral heritage;
With shining wood adorned is it new built;
Arranged in order duly; many a device
Adorns it, and maxims, which the traveller
Lingers to read, and wonders at their meaning.

STAUFFACHER.

The house is nobly planned and well adorned;
But the ground is tottering on which 'tis built.

GERTRUDE.

What mean thy words, my Werner?

STAUFFACHER.

'Neath this lime,
Last eve at sunset, as we are sitting now,
I sat and looked with pleasure on the work
But now accomplished; when on yonder road
The governor from his castle, with attendants,
Approached from Küssnacht. Here he stopped. I rose
With due respect to the man who represented
The emperor's power in this unhappy realm.
"Whose house is that?" he asked, yet knowing well,—
But such his ill intent. With quick resolve
I thus returned to him: "This house, my lord,
Belongs unto my liege the emperor—
The tenure of it is mine." Then he replied,
"In the emperor's stead I am regent in this land;
And it is not my will that the peasants build
And live as they were nobles. By the power
I am entrusted with, I will prevent it."
So saying, with insolent look he went his way,
And I remained, with sad and sorrowful soul,
Musing upon the words that he had spoken.

GERTRUDE.

Werner! my dearest husband! wilt thou hear
And deign to listen to my words of counsel?
I boast me daughter of the noble Iberg,
Famed for his wisdom and experience.
I and my sisters through long winter-nights
Sat spinning wool, when at my father's house
The elders of the people met, and read
The charters of the ancient emperors,

And the land's weal considered loyally,
With sage discourse. I listening the while,
Heard many a high and noble saying
Of what the wise man thought and the good wished,
And in my heart I still have treasured them;
So not all trivial now my words may be.
Ah! listen while I speak: I long have known
A part, at least, of that which troubles you.
The governor hates you; he would willingly
Find cause to injure you; for you to him
Are cause of hindrance that to Austria's yoke
The Swiss will not submit themselves, but stand
Faithful in their allegiance to the realm,
As did their forefathers. Ah! tell me, Werner,
Is not this true?

STAUFFACHER.

It is, and therefore Gessler hates me.

GERTRUDE.

He envies thee because thou dwellest happy,
A free man on thy own inheritance;
For he has none. From the emperor himself
Thou holdest thy house in tenure—thou canst shew
Thy title good as prince's to his realm.
Above thee there is none thou callest lord,
Save only him who is highest in Christendom.
While *he*, a younger brother of his house,
Nought but the mantle that declares him knight
Can call his own. Upon thy better fortunes
He looks with envious eyes. Against thee long
Has he sworn enmity and plotted ruin.
As yet thou stand'st unharmed; but wilt thou wait
Till wicked thoughts against thee grow to acts?—
The wise man looks beforehand.

STAUFFACHER.

What can I do?

GERTRUDE (*pressing nearer*).

Listen to what I say:—There's not a man
In Switz but bitterly complains in secret
Of Gessler's pride and avarice; and elsewhere,
In the lands of Unterwald and Uri,
Many, I doubt not, groan beneath the yoke

So hard, so heavy; for, beyond the lake,
Landenberg harshly rules as Gessler here,
Nor e'er a fishing-boat reaches our shore
But brings from thence some instance of his bold
And shameless arrogance. Surely 'twere right
That some among you, of pure high intent,
Should question 'mong yourselves the means whereby
The yoke of the oppressor should be broken;
And I am sure that God will not forsake you,
But will shew grace unto your righteous cause.
Say, are there none in Uri whom thy heart
Can trust with the secret of its injuries?

STAUFFACHER.

Many brave men in Uri are my friends—
Many illustrious nobles whom I love
And trust as my own soul. [*He stands up,*
But oh! my wife,
What a storm of fearful passions thou hast raised
In the heart that beat so tranquilly! To the light
Of heaven thou hast unbared my secret mind;
And that which I forbade my thoughts to dream,
Hast spoken boldly, and with fearless tongue.
Hast thou well thought on what thou counsellest me?
Wild discord and the clang of arms thou callest
Into these vales, where peace so long hath dwelt.
And how shall we, mere shepherds of the mountains,
Array ourselves in battle against those
Who are the rulers of the earth? To let
Loose on our ill-starred land their savage hordes
They only wait a pretext; and this gained,
To rule us as their slaves, and to o'erturn
The charters of our freedom.

GERTRUDE.

Ye also
Are *men*, and ye can wield your mountain-axe.
Ye are brave, and the brave God helps!

STAUFFACHER.

Oh, wife!
War is a fearful, desolating curse;
War slayeth the shepherd and the innocent lambs,

GERTRUDE.

The good, though it seemeth ill, sent us by Heaven,
We will endure with patient gratitude;
The iniquity of man no noble heart
Will suffer.

STAUFFACHER.

This house that you delight in,
But now completed, where so many a wish
Formed since our nuptial home first smiled on us,—
Where we both looked to meet our peaceful end,—
War may lay waste, or burn, or make the scene
For godless men to revel in.

GERTRUDE.

Knew I my heart
Chained to a temporal good, my hand should be
The first to cast a firebrand on the house
I love so well.

STAUFFACHER.

But thou hast hope and faith
In man's humanity;—the tender child,
Even the infant in its cradle, war
Spares not.

GERTRUDE.

In Heaven hath innocence a friend!
Look up, my Werner, to the heaven that lies
In tranquil beauty o'er our heads. Look forwards—
Not behind thee.

STAUFFACHER.

We men may die in fight
With honour, as your heart could wish, my Gertrude;
But oh! what fate would be reserved for you?

GERTRUDE.

There is one choice lies open to us all:
One spring from yonder bridge will make me free.

STAUFFACHER (*clasps her in his arms*).

Who clasps unto his bosom heart like thine,
Would die with joy defending hearth and home,
And would not fear though kings were leagued against him.
To Uri will I go; my ancient friend,
Whom I so long have trusted, Walter Fürst,
Dwells there; he will give heed, yea, more than heed,

Unto my thoughts. There also shall I find
The lord of Attinghausen: though of old
And noble race, he loves us, and respects
Our ancient customs. Counsel will I ask
Of both, how best to make defence against
The enemy of our land. Gertrude, farewell.
Do thou in my absence prudently direct
The business of our household. Freely give
To the pilgrim travelling to holy shrine,
To the pious monk collecting for his cloister,
Shewing them hospitality. The house
Of Stauffacher is not concealed, but stands
Close by the public road; with open door
It should invite the passer-by to enter,
And find refreshment and repose.

*As they go into the background,* WILLIAM TELL *and* BAUMGARTEN *enter at the front of the stage.*

TELL (*to* BAUMGARTEN).

You have now
No farther need of me,—In yonder house
Dwells Stauffacher, the friend of the oppressed:
Yet stay—he is there; and we will speak to him.

[*They move towards him. The scene changes.*

## SCENE III.

*An open ground near Altdorf. Upon an eminence in the background a castle is seen building, which is already so far advanced that its general plan is evident. The farther side is completed: on the forepart the work of building is going on; the scaffolding is still standing, upon which the workmen are ascending and descending; upon the highest point of the roof the slater is clinging. All is bustle and movement.*

*Overseer, Master Stonemason, Labourers, and Helpers.*

OVERSEER (*urging on the workmen with his cane*).

I'll have no loitering here! The stone, the mortar!
Quick with them!—do you hear?—that the governor
May see the work well speeding when he comes.
'Twould shame a snail to crawl so sluggishly!

[*To two labourers who are carrying.*

Call ye that loaded? Heap on more stones: double
The weight. You are lazy knaves, from first to last.

FIRST LABOURER.

'Tis hard indeed to carry the very stones
To pile the building that shall be our prison!

OVERSEER.

So! grumbling still! ye are worthless wretches all,
Fitted for nothing but to milk the cattle,
And saunter lazily about the mountains.

OLD MAN (*resting himself*).

I can do no more.

OVERSEER (*shaking him*).

Up, old man, to your work!

FIRST LABOURER.

Have ye no mercy, that ye thus will drive
A poor old man, that scarce his limbs can carry,
To such a heavy task?

MASTER STONEMASON *and* LABOURERS.

'Tis crying shame!

OVERSEER.

It is no shame for men to do their duty.

SECOND LABOURER.

Sir, what shall be the name of this same castle
That we are building?

OVERSEER.

'Twill be *Uri Prison;*
For, mark you! 'neath this yoke ye shall be bowed.

LABOURERS.

Uri prison!

OVERSEER.

Is that a word for laughter?

SECOND LABOURER.

And with these walls ye will *imprison* Uri.

FIRST LABOURER.

We'll see how many mole-heaps such as this
Must be together piled, ere from the mass
A mountain springs, though but the least in Uri.

[*Overseer goes towards the back part of the stage.*

MASTER STONEMASON.

Into the depths o' th' lake I'll fling the hammer
With which I worked on this accursed building.

TELL *and* STAUFFACHER *come.*

STAUFFACHER.

Would I had died ere I set eyes on this!

TELL.

We shall do no good here: let us be going.

STAUFFACHER.

Am I in Uri, in the land of freedom?

MASTER STONEMASON.

Ah, sir! had you but seen the fearful dungeons
Beneath the towers!—the man who once dwells *there*
Need never think to hear the cock crow more.

STAUFFACHER.

O God!

MASTER STONEMASON.

Look on those wings and buttresses;
They stand as if fixed here for eternity!

TELL.

What hands have built, hands may hurl down again.
[*Pointing towards the mountains.*
*There* God for us has the foundations laid
Of th' house of freedom.

*A drum is heard; a number of people enter, carrying a hat upon a pole, followed by a Herald. Women and children press tumultuously after them.*

FIRST LABOURER.

Hark! what means that noise?

MASTER STONEMASON.

What pilgrimage goes on? What means the hat?

HERALD.

Listen! in the emperor's name.

LABOURERS.

Be still then, listen.

HERALD.

Ye men of Uri, who behold this hat—
In the chief square of Altdorf will be raised

A pole, whose lofty summit it shall crown;
And this is the seneschal's will and ordinance:
Each passer-by shall offer to this hat
The self-same reverence as to himself,—
With bended knee, and with the head uncovered,
Obeisance shall be made it. By this token
The king will prove your duty and obedience.
And further, he who dares to disobey
And spurn this mandate, is, with goods and chattels,
Lawfully confiscate unto the king.

*The people burst out into laughter, the drum beats, and the crowd disperse.*

FIRST LABOURER.

What is this new and most unheard-of whim
The governor has devised?—salute a hat!
Whoever yet e'er heard or dreamt such folly?

MASTER STONEMASON.

We bend the knee before an empty hat!
Makes he a sport of honest high-souled people?

FIRST LABOURER.

Were it the imperial crown, indeed! But 'tis
The cap of Austria; I saw it hang
Above the throne at which the vassal lieges
Receive their fiefs.

MASTER STONEMASON.

The cap of Austria!
Take heed; it is a stratagem to betray us
Into the hands of Austria.

LABOURERS.

No true man
Can e'er submit unto such foul disgrace.

MASTER STONEMASON.

Come, let us make agreement with our comrades.

[*They go towards the valley.*

TELL (*to* STAUFFACHER).

My business here you know. So farewell, Werner.

STAUFFACHER.

Where are you bound? Go not away so soon.

TELL.

My household look for my return. Fareweil.

STAUFFACHER.

My heart is full of thoughts I fain would tell thee.

TELL.

Words make not light the heart that is o'erburdened.

STAUFFACHER.

Words may lead on to deeds.

TELL.

The only deed
Now left to us is to submit in silence.

STAUFFACHER.

Are we to bear what is beyond endurance?

TELL.

Brief is authority which is misused.
When from its caverns deep the Fohn breaks loose,
We quench the fire, the vessels seek in haste
A quiet harbour: then the mighty spirit
Goes forth, and passes o'er the earth, nor leaves
A trace of harm. Let each one tranquil dwell:
With the peaceful man peace dwells as 'twere her home.

STAUFFACHER.

What mean you, Tell?

TELL.

The serpent puts not forth
Her sting unless provoked; our foes at length
Will weary of their malice, if the land
Remains at peace.

STAUFFACHER.

Were we united firmly,
We might do much.

TELL.

In shipwrecks each best helps
Himself.

STAUFFACHER.

So coldly, then, do you forsake
The common cause?

TELL.

Upon himself alone
Each man can count with safety.

STAUFFACHER.

E'en the weak,
Bound by one mutual cause, are strong.

TELL.

The strong
Are mightiest *alone*.

STAUFFACHER.

Your fatherland
May not then hope your aid, if, desperate of help,
It takes up arms?

TELL.

Tell rescued a lost lamb
From the abyss—will he desert his friends?
In what you seek to do ask not my *counsel*.
I cannot choose and weigh over events;
But if for a determined *deed* some hand
You need, then call on Tell—he will not fail you.

[*Exeunt at different sides. A sudden outcry is heard on the scaffold.*

MASTER STONEMASON (*hastens towards them*).

What has happened? Why is all this tumult raised?

FIRST WORKMAN (*comes forward, crying*).

One of the workmen from the roof has fallen.

BERTHA, *with followers.*

BERTHA (*she presses forwards*).

He is not killed! Run—save him; help,
If help is possible—save; here is gold!

[*She throws her ornaments among the crowd.*

MASTER STONEMASON.

Gold!—shall all things be forgiven for gold?
Think you, if you tear a father from his child,
A husband from his wife, and through the world
Spread misery, that gold will make amends!
Go: we were happy till you came among us,
And you have driven us to despair.

BERTHA (*to the officer, who returns*).

Oh, say
If yet he lives! [*The officer makes a sign in the negative.*
Unhappy castle, built
By hands that cursed each stone that raised thy towers,
A curse shall dwell for ever on thy walls! [*Exeunt.*

## Scene IV.

*Walter Fürst's house.*

Walter Fürst *and* Arnold von Melchthal.

(*They go to meet each other from opposite sides of the stage.*)

MELCHTHAL.

My honoured friend—

WALTER FÜRST.

Hush! lest we be surprised;
Spies are on every side.

MELCHTHAL.

Oh! say, do you bring
No news from Unterwald? none from my father?—
Oh! I can bear no longer to remain
A prisoner, except in name, idly concealed.
What have I done so wicked or so base
That I need hide me as a murderer?
Only the finger of the insolent knave
(I would it had been more!) with my staff I broke,
Who drove away before my very eyes,
At the command, he said, of the governor,
My noble, excellent yoke of oxen. Shame
Such things should be permitted in our land!

WALTER FÜRST.

My boy, you are too rash. The messenger
Was Landenberg's, and by commission sent
From him your governor. You lie
Under the power of the law, and, hard
As it may be, must bear the punishment.

MELCHTHAL.

And must I bear the light and wanton taunts
Of shameless men? "If boors want bread to eat,
For themselves let them draw the ploughshare." Oh!
It cut me to the soul when the boy unloosed
My noble oxen from the plough; aloud
They lowed and tossed their horns, as if they knew
The wrong and the injustice that was done:
Losing for the moment mastery o'er myself,
With angry blow I struck the messenger.

WALTER FÜRST.

Scarcely my heart condemns thee; scarce can we,
Who are old, restrain our wrath; how far less then
The wildly beating pulse of youth!

MELCHTHAL.

I grieve
But for my father's sake; he needs the care
Of one who loves him, and his son is absent.
The governor hates him; for unwearyingly
For the right and freedom of our land he strives,
And this is cause why they should persecute
A noble, aged man: and none is there
To shield him from their unjust tyranny.
Happen what may to me, this night I go
Back to my father.

WALTER FÜRST.

Oh! wait here patiently
Till news is sent to us from Unterwald.
I hear one knocking—go; perchance there comes
A messenger from Küssnacht; even here
You are not safe from Landenberg: tyrants
Fail not to aid each other.

MELCHTHAL.

Surely, then,
We'll rival them in this, and with true minds
Will hold to one another in all fortunes.

WALTER FÜRST.

Go in, my son, and I will call you back,
If, as I hope, no danger comes. [MELCHTHAL *goes in.*
Alas,
Unhappy youth, I dare not say the ill
My heart forebodes.—Who knocks? The door ne'er opes
But that I fear some evil or mischance;
Doubt and suspicion lurk on every side;
The messengers of unjust power break in
And violate our home's sweet sanctity.
Soon shall we need to arm our once-safe mansions
With bolts and bars.

[*He opens the door, and starts back astonished when* WERNER STAUFFACHER *enters.*

What! Werner? Now, by Heaven, I see a dear
And honoured guest—no better man has e'er
My threshold passed; welcome beneath my roof!
What brings you here? What seek you here in Uri?

STAUFFACHER (*giving him his hand*).
Old times, and Switzerland as it was of yore.

WALTER FÜRST.
You bring them with you. Ha! my heart beats warm
And kindly at your voice. Sit down. How fares
Your wife, the daughter of the far-famed Iberg,
Meet child in form and mind for such a sire?
All travellers from the land of Germany
Who take their way by Meinrad's cell, proclaim
Your hospitality. Came you direct
Here from Fluellan? Saw you aught in Uri
Before you crossed my doorway?

STAUFFACHER (*sits down*).
Yes; a strange work in progress did I see,
Which pleased me not.

WALTER FÜRST.
Rightly you have read its purpose.

STAUFFACHER.
The like in Uri never yet was known:
No dungeon ever stood within its walls;
No cell e'er barred our freedom, save the grave.

WALTER FÜRST.
Alas! 'tis the grave of freedom; you have named
It well.

STAUFFACHER.
My friend, no more will I delay
To tell the secret cause that led me here.
It was no idle trifle; heavy cares
Weighed on my soul; oppression did I leave
In Switz, my home; oppression found I here:
What we have to suffer is past sufferance,
And for our misery I see no end.
In all past ages that the memory
Of man can trace has Switzerland been free:
In gentle treatment have our souls been nurtured;
We cannot bear this rude and brutal force;

So long as herdsman's step hath trod our hills,
The like has ne'er been heard of in our lands.

WALTER FÜRST.

Yes, without sample is their tyranny:
Even our noble lord of Attinghausen,
Who other times has seen, and measures them
With these, thinks that we are not bound to bear
Such wrongs.

STAUFFACHER.

In Unterwald hath crime been planned,
And stopped with bloody vengeance ere it came
To deed. The emperor's seneschal—you know him,
At Rossberg—Wolfenschiessen—hath with base
And shameless purpose sought to wrong the wife
Of Baumgarten, a peasant of Alzel;
But, in the act of seizing the forbidden fruit,
Her husband slew him with his axe.

WALTER FÜRST.

O God!
Thy punishments are just! Baumgarten, said you?
Is he, then, safe, and free from peril?

STAUFFACHER.

Your daughter's husband put him o'er the lake;
With me, at Steinen, lies he now concealed.
But things more grievous yet, that have been done
At Sarnen, has this same man related—
Things which, to hear, the heart of every man
That has a touch of mercy in't will bleed.

WALTER FÜRST (*anxiously*).

Say on—what is it you have to tell?

STAUFFACHER.

In Melchthal,
On the road as you go from Kern's, there dwells
A man whom all speak well of, and his voice
Is paid much heed to by the commonwealth;
They call him Heinrich von der Haldensten.

WALTER FÜRST.

Who knows him not? Oh! what of him?—say quickly.

STAUFFACHER.

The governor, for some most slight offence,
Had laid a penalty upon his son,

And the best yoke of oxen that he had
They seized while he was ploughing in the field;
Then the boy struck the officer, and fled.

WALTER FÜRST (*with the deepest attention*).
But the father of the boy,—what ails him?

STAUFFACHER.
They came, the attendants of the governor,
And asked him for his son, and bade him call
Him to the spot on the instant; but he swore,
And truly, that he knew not where the boy
Had fled. Then the governor had the rack
Prepared.

WALTER FÜRST (*he springs up, and tries to lead him to the other side*).
Oh still,—no more!

STAUFFACHER (*in a louder voice*).
"Thy son escaped!"
He cried; "thee will we punish in his stead."
With that they threw him down upon the ground,
And thrust a pointed iron in his eyes.

WALTER FÜRST.
Merciful Heaven!

MELCHTHAL (*rushes into the room*).
Into his eyes? Oh, speak! Oh, contradict
Your words!

STAUFFACHER (*astonished; to* WALTER FÜRST).
Who is this youth?

MELCHTHAL (*seizes him with convulsive eagerness*).
For Heaven's sake,
Say not 'twas his eyes they touched!

WALTER FÜRST.
O misery!
For his age they might have had respect.

STAUFFACHER.
Say,
Who is this youth?—His son! all righteous God!
[*As* WALTER FÜRST *makes him a sign.*

MELCHTHAL.

And I
Have brought this evil on my father! Say
Once more, have they pierced both his eyes?

WALTER FÜRST.

Be calm,
And bear it as a man!

MELCHTHAL.

For *my* sake,
For *my* guilt, is he punished. Blind!
Oh! that my eyes I could cast out for his!
Oh, say he is not blind!—some light shall yet
Visit his innocent eyes!

STAUFFACHER.

Alas! No more
Shall he behold the sun; the source of light
Is quenched for him.

WALTER FÜRST.

Oh, spare his pain!

MELCHTHAL.

Never!
Oh, never more!

[*He presses his hand before his eyes, and is silent for some moments; then he turns from one to the other, and speaks in a softer voice, interrupted by tears.*

Oh, what a noble heavenly gift
Is light! All creatures that do live rejoice
In light, as 'twere their daily sustenance.
The plants turn to the light, as if to bless
The rays of the glad sun 'neath which they dwell.
And he must sit, and dwell for evermore
In darkness like the grave. No more for him
The meadows clothe themselves, or the bright flowers
Unfold their fairest petals to the morn.
The Firn upon the mountains he no more
May watch. To die is nothing; but to *live*
And not to *see*,—oh, that were hard to bear!
Why do you look on me so pityingly?
My eyes are well—are sound; yet can I give
My blinded father not a single ray
Of the sea of light that falls so dazzlingly
Upon my sense.

STAUFFACHER.

Mine is a heavy task;
I must e'en yet increase the bitter grief
I fain would heal: yet more than light he needs—
The governor has robbed him of his all—
Hath left him nothing but a staff to guide
His blind and wandering steps from door to door.

MELCHTHAL.

Nought but a staff unto the blind old man!
Robbed of his all! Even the light of heaven,
Which is the lot of the poorest, stolen from *him!*
Oh, counsel me not now to hide me here:
I am a heartless coward to have stayed,
Thinking of my own safety, not of *thine*—
Leaving thy noble, thy beloved head
As a prey in the tyrant's hands. Farewell,
Weak-hearted prudence; nothing now remains
But bloody retribution for the past,—
There will I go, and none shall hold me back;
I will reproach the tyrant for his crime,
And from the governor will require the light
That he has stolen from my father's eyes;
E'en though a thousand guards surround him, still
Will I search him out: my life I care not for,
So I my hot and boundless grief may cool
In his life's blood! [*He is going.*

WALTER FÜRST.

Stay; go not madly forth
To venture such a deed. What *can* you do?
At Sarnen, high within his lordly castle,
He sits secure, and from its towers would mock
Your weak and idle rage.

MELCHTHAL.

And dwelt he high
Beyond the icy palace of the Schreckhorn,
Or even higher, where the Jungfrau sits
Beneath her veil of everlasting snow,
I'd make my way to him. With twenty youths,
Armed like myself with giant strength, I'd break
His castle-gates; and if none follow me,—
If ye, for fear of your houses and your hearths,

Will bow ye to the tyrant's yoke,—I'll go
Forth 'neath the glorious arch of heaven, where still
The mind is pure and the heart sound, and call
The shepherds of the mountains to attend
While I proclaim this fearful cruelty.

STAUFFACHER (*to* WALTER FÜRST).

Even did we pause until the very worst
Were done, our injuries have reached their height,
And we need wait no more.

MELCHTHAL.

Why should we wait?
What greater evil is there in the world
Than that the sense that carries light and life
Into our souls in jeopardy should lie
Each day at the tyrant's will? Have we not arms?
Why did we learn to bend the bow, to wield
The battle-axe? All creatures that do live,
In anguish or despair, some weapon find:
Thus stands the almost dying stag, and turns
His antlers to the hounds; the chamois thrusts
The huntsman down the abyss; the patient ox,
Man's constant aid and friend, who meekly bends
His strong neck 'neath the yoke, springs up provoked,
And hurls his enemy high unto the clouds.

WALTER FÜRST.

If all within our states thought with one mind,
Something, perhaps, our efforts might accomplish.

STAUFFACHER.

When Unterwald and Uri stand agreed,
Switz will renew once more her ancient league.

MELCHTHAL.

Many friends have I in Unterwald, and each
Would gladly risk his fortune or his life
To shield his comrade. Fathers in our state—
Pious and honoured of us all—I stand,
A youth, before your reverend wisdom, one
Whose voice as yet hath not been heard in the halls
Of the confederate council of our realm.
Yet oh! despise not ye my youth, nor scorn
The wisdom I have learned from grief, not years;
It is no hasty whim urges me on,

But the wild impulse of a woe so deep
That it would force the rocks to pity me,
Yourselves are fathers, chiefs of your own household;
And would ye not a son with pious care
Should honour your grey hair, and guard from harm
The eyes that have watched o'er him from his youth?
Because till now ye have not suffered harm
In life or goods,—because as yet your eyes
Carry the light still freshly to your souls,—
Oh! be not therefore careless of our wrongs:
The tyrant's sword is hanging o'er your heads.
To alienate the land from Austria
Has been your work. This was my father's fault,
And ye stand in like guilt and condemnation.

STAUFFACHER (*to* WALTER FÜRST).

Resolve; my heart will follow where you lead.

WALTER FÜRST.

We will hear the counsel of our noble friends
The lords of Sillinen and Attinghausen;
Methinks their names have power to win us friends.

MELCHTHAL.

There is no name in all the mountain-forests
More worthy to be honoured, to be loved,
Than yours; such names, like sound of happy bells,
Call cheerily; they weigh much with the people:
A noble heritage was left to you
Of virtue by your sires; ye the rich gift
Have prized and made more precious. Do we need
The help of those above us? Let us work
Alone the glorious deed; were we alone
In this our land, with these our countrymen,
Methinks we should not fail for want of aid.

STAUFFACHER.

The nobles suffer not our wrongs—the stream
That bathes the valleys has not reached the hills;
Yet they their help will not deny, when once
They see the countrymen they love in arms.

WALTER FÜRST.

Were an umpire fixed 'twixt us and Austria,
Then law and justice might decide our cause;

But he who injures us is emperor
And highest judge. *We will appeal to God,*
And He will help us through our arms. Go you
And find allies in Switz; in Uri I
Will seek out friends; but who may we entrust
To carry news to Unterwald?

MELCHTHAL.

Send me; for none
Can plead the cause so earnestly.

WALTER FÜRST.

Go not;
You are my guest, and danger threatens you;
I am bound to guard your safety.

MELCHTHAL.

Ah! seek
Not to detain me—I must go; I know
Each mountain-path and alley through the woods,
And friends who will protect me, and give shelter,
If so needs be, from enemies.

STAUFFACHER.

My friend,
Bid him good speed; for God will shelter him.
No traitors dwell in Unterwald; for there
Is tyranny so hated, it can find
No tools to work its wickedness. The man
Of Alzel too, Baumgarten, goes before him,
To rouse the land and levy us companions.

MELCHTHAL.

How shall we carry news from one to the other,
And yet escape suspicion from the tyrants?

STAUFFACHER.

At Brunnen we will meet, or by the lake,
At the place where merchants' ships unlade their stores.

WALTER FÜRST.

To meet so openly we must not venture.
Left of the lake, as o'er the Myttenstein
You pass from Brunnen, lies a lonely meadow,
As 'twere within a wood, so hidden it lies;
The herdsmen call it Rütli, because long
The wood hath been uprooted;—it is there [*To* MELCHTHAL.

Our landmark borders close to yours; and there
A boat across the lake will carry you [*To* STAUFFACHER.
In an hour's time from Switz. By unknown paths,
And in the night, we can meet there, and mould
Our thoughts into a shape to be wrought out in deeds.
Thither may each ten trusted comrades bring,
Who heart and soul have given to our cause;
So we may there in fearless confidence
Take thought and counsel of our country's wrongs,
And seek, with the aid of God, some quick redress.

STAUFFACHER.

So let it be. Now both reach me your hands—
You, Walter Furst; and you, young Arnold Melchthal;
And as we *three* together clasp our hands
In all sincerity and truth, our three
Respective states, Switz, Uri, Unterwald,
Shall, even in life and death, stand firm, and guard
Each other.

WALTER FÜRST *and* MELCHTHAL.

In life and death!

[*They hold their hands for some moments clasped together, and are silent.*

MELCHTHAL.

My father!
Thou wilt not *see* the day of freedom dawn;
But thou shalt hear it. When from Alp to Alp
The beacon-fires shall rise, and the firm walls
Of the castles of our tyrants fall to the earth,
Within thy cottage shall the Switzer haste,
And pour into thine ear the news of joy,
So that e'en the darkness round thee shall become
Bright with the glorious sun of freedom! [*Exeunt.*

## ACT II. Scene I.

*The castle of the Baron of Attinghausen. A gothic chamber, hung round with escutcheons and helmets. The baron, a grey-headed man, eighty-five years old, of high and noble bearing, clothed in a garment of furs, is leaning on a staff of chamois horn. Kuoni and six other servants stand round him with rakes and scythes.*

Ulric von Rudenz *enters in the garb of a knight.*

RUDENZ.

Behold me at your bidding! What is now
Your will?

ATTINGHAUSEN.

First let me share the morning draught
With these my people, as the custom was
Of old. [*He drinks, and the cup is then passed round the circle.*
Once I was with them in the field,
Cheering, directing all their daily tasks;
They bore my banner faithful in the fight.
But now, alas! my former place I yield;
The genial sun no longer comes to me;
I can no more go seek it on the hills;
And so, in a narrow and still-narrowing circle,
Onward I move to the narrowest and the last,
Where the pulse of life is still, the hand moves not,
I am but a shadow of my former self,
And soon that shade will pass into a name.

KUONI (*to* RUDENZ, *with the cup*).

I bring it you, my lord. [Rudenz *hesitates to take it.*
Drink it—'tis fresh,
And rises from one heart as from one cup.

ATTINGHAUSEN (*to his attendants*).

Leave us; when the evening meal is done,
We will take counsel of our country's cause.
[*Exeunt* Kuoni *and attendants.*

ATTINGHAUSEN *to* RUDENZ.

Thy dress is gay—thou art attired with care;
Where goest thou? to Altdorf? to the castle?

RUDENZ.

Yes, uncle; and I may not tarry longer.

ATTINGHAUSEN (*sits down*).

So hasty are you? What! is time in youth
So scantily dealt out that your old uncle
May claim not e'en an hour?

RUDENZ.

Sir, my presence
Here is not desired. I as a stranger am
Beneath your roof.

ATTINGHAUSEN (*looks at him earnestly for some time*).

Alas! thou art. To thee this home, this hearth,
Has become strange and unfamiliar.
O Uly, Uly, scarce I know thee now:
In silk thou deck'st thyself; and haughtily
Thou wear'st the peacock's plume upon thy cap,
And the purple mantle on thy shoulders hung;
Upon the peasant lookest thou with scorn,
And dost receive with shame his homely greeting.

RUDENZ.

Gladly I pay the honour due to him;
The right that he assumes I cannot give.

ATTINGHAUSEN.

Under the bitter anger of the king
Our country lies, and every noble heart
Grieves for the tyranny that we endure.
Thou only in the universal sorrow
Remain'st unmoved—a traitor to thy country:
We see thee 'mong the ranks of our oppressors,
Our need despising, seeking the most light
And trivial pleasures, courting e'en the smiles
Of those 'neath whom thy injured country bleeds.

RUDENZ.

The land is sore oppressed; but by whose fault?
Say, uncle, what the cause of all this evil?
Only a little easy word 'twould cost
To ease it in a moment from its wrongs,

And soothe a gracious emperor. Alas
For those who blind the people's eyes, and hide
Their real good from them! For their own sake,
And not for their land's welfare, they would seek
The people of Waldstetten to prevent
From swearing fealty to Austria,
As all the land hath done. I marvel not:
It suits their fancy well to range themselves
'Mong those who are nobles by the right of birth;
They choose the emperor for their lord, that they
May have no lord above them.

ATTINGHAUSEN.

Must I hear
Such words from thee, alas!

RUDENZ.

You bade me speak;
And I with few words more will vex your ears.
What part is it you yourself have chosen
To play on life's great stage? No higher pride
Have you than here, as landamman or chief,
Over a horde of uncouth hinds to rule.
Say—is't not better, and more honourable,
Homage to pay unto a kingly lord,
To be numbered with his brave and noble guard,
Visit his brilliant court, than here to dwell
Peer 'mong a race of base-born hinds, and sit
In judgment with the clowns?

ATTINGHAUSEN.

Uly, Uly,
These are not thy own words. I hear the voice
Of some seducing power that has misled
Thy mind and sense; some influence that has seized
Thy open ear—poisoned thy very heart.

RUDENZ.

I seek not to conceal it; to the soul
It wounded me to hear the strangers' taunts.
*Peasants* they called us; we deserve the name,
To waste our noble blood ignobly thus.
I cannot tamely watch our bravest youth
Gather with honour under Hapsburg's banner,
And idly here on my inheritance,

In the daily course of mean and common life,
Let my best years pass by. Elsewhere are deeds,
Great deeds, achieved; a world of glory lies,
And high renown to be won, beyond these hills.
My shield and helmet rust upon the walls;
The warlike clang of the trumpet sounds not here;
The herald's call—that summons to the list—
In these wild lonely valleys echoes not;
No music have we but the Ranz des Vaches,
And the ceaseless tinkling of the cattle-bells.

ATTINGHAUSEN.

My son! the heir of all my hopes! thine eyes
Are blinded with false glare of unreal greatness.
Shame on thee to despise thy fatherland,
The pious customs that thy fathers loved!
With burning tears hereafter wilt thou long
For the familiar mountains of thy home.
The cowherd's melody, that now you scorn,
Blent with a thousand sorrows and regrets,
Shall fall upon your ear 'neath foreign skies;—
Pure and all-powerful is the love that binds
The soul unto its native clime. The world
You so much boast of was not made for you;
Its snares and treacheries need some baser arts
Than you have learned in these still tranquil valleys.
Go! and within the emperor's brilliant court
Dwell,—stranger to yourself and your heart's friends.
What! barter your free soul! take land in fief!
Become a prince's vassal! while with free
And noble homage you might hold the lands
Which have descended from a noble race!
Oh! act not falsely to thy better mind;
Be not a traitor to thy nobler self—
Ulric! desert not thou thy home, thy people;
Go not to Altdorf. Oh! forsake thou not
Thy country's holy cause. I am the last
Of all my race; my name will end with me—
There hang my helm and shield, soon to be laid
With me in the grave. And, as my last breath dies,
Must the bitter thought come o'er my soul, that thou
Art waiting only till mine eyes shall close
To cut the last weak bond that holds thee now—

To league thyself with the tyrant, and unite
The noble lands which I received from God
(Holding them free as the very air I breathed)
To those that basely have allowed the claim
Of Austria; thus adding to her pride,
Heightening her power and her insolence,
And flinging, with one mad rash act, away
Thy own high privilege.

RUDENZ.

'Twere vain to strive
Against the king—the world belongs to him.
Shall we alone oppose, and arm ourselves
Obstinately against his power, and seek
To break the feudal chains he has drawn round us?
His are the markets and the courts of justice:
The merchant pays him duty: even the carrier
That passes o'er the Gothard brings him toll.
On every side by his domains are we
Hemmed in, as with a net. 'Twere vain to hope
Protection from the realm; not e'en itself
Can it protect 'gainst Austria's growing power:
If God doth help us not, no emperor can.
Oh, uncle! 'twere a wise and prudent foresight,
In these dark times of parties and of change,
To shield ourselves beneath a mighty banner,
And cling to one more powerful than ourselves.

ATTINGHAUSEN.

Art thou so wise?
Seest thou more clearly than thy ancestors,
Who for the priceless gem of freedom fought
With blood, and wealth, and strength?—To Lucerne go;
There ask how Austria rules the land. She comes
To number out our sheep, our herds; our Alps
To portion out, and banish from our woods
The merry sound of the dogs, the huntsman's horn;
On every gate and bridge her toll to set,
That she may by our poverty grow rich,
And shed our blood to win her unjust battles.
If our heart's blood must flow, oh, let it be
In our own holy cause! More cheaply we
Would purchase liberty than slavery!

RUDENZ.

But how can we, a nation of shepherds, hope
To oppose the armed power of Austria?

ATTINGHAUSEN.

Oh, learn to know the soul that proudly dwells
Within the bosom of these mountain shepherds!
I know it—I have led them to the field—
I have seen them fight before the walls of Favenz.
It is a yoke we cannot, will not bear,
That Austria would thrust upon our land.
Oh, learn to feel from what high race thou art sprung!
Oh, barter not for splendour or vain show
Thy worth, the ancient glory of thy name!
To be the honoured chief of a free people,
Who love thee with a heartfelt love, and stand
True by thy side, to fight and die for thee,—
This be thy boast, thy pride. The gentle bonds
By Nature's pure hand woven, hold thou firm.
Cling to thy native land and guard her rights!
Forsake her not, but love her with a love
That cannot die. Here is thy power felt,
Its roots are planted in a kindly soil.
There, in the busy world to which thou goest,
Thou wouldst be weak and lone—a quivering reed
Bent down by every storm. Oh, it is long
Since thou hast dwelt at home! Stay, stay with us,
If only for one day; go not to Altdorf—
For one day only stay among thy people!
[*He seizes his hand.*

RUDENZ.

I gave my word; in honour I am bound
To go.

ATTINGHAUSEN (*lets fall his hand, and speaks earnestly*).

Thou art bound, unhappy boy?
Ay, thou art bound; yet not with words or oaths,
But by the bonds of love! [RUDENZ *turns away.*
I know the spell
That draws thy steps to Herrenburg, and chains
Thy service to the emperor. In the hope
That Bruneck's heiress thou may'st win, thy heart
Has grown forgetful of thy country's cause:

Yet think not thou the noble maid shalt gain,
It is but as a bait to lure thee on
That they permit thy hopes. Far other lot
For her is destined. Be not so deceived.

RUDENZ.

I've heard enough: farewell!

ATTINGHAUSEN,

Alas, he's gone!
Rash youth! I cannot save or hold him back.
The heir of Wolfenschiessen too is gone.
Others will follow. Strange and strong the spell
That from the mountains steals our youth away.
Oh, ill-starred hour in which the stranger came
Into our happy valleys, to destroy
The pious, innocent customs of our fathers!
New customs take the place of old; old times,
Which I and my fathers honoured, are no more.
Another race, with other thoughts, has sprung
From the soil that once was ours. Why should I live?
What do I here? They lie beneath the grave
Who bore with me their burden on life's stage.
Happy for him who shall not live to see
The changes that the new times bear with them! [*Exit.*

## SCENE II.

*A meadow surrounded by high cliffs and woods. Upon the rocks are steps and ladders, on which people are descending. In the background is seen the lake, upon which in the beginning of the scene a lunar rainbow appears. In the distance are high mountains, beyond which rise glaciers still higher. It is midnight, but the lake and the white glaciers are bright in the moonlight.*

MELCHTHAL, BAUMGARTEN, WINKELRIED, MEYER VON SARNEN, BURKHARDT AM BÜHEL, ARNOLD VON SEWA, KLAUS VON DER FLÜE, *and four other Peasants, all armed.*

MELCHTHAL (*still behind the scenes*).

The way is open—follow me! I know
The rock with the cross that crowns its point:
We are at the place; here is the Rootli.
[*They follow him with lanterns.*

WINKELRIED.

Hark!

SEWA.

All's clear!

MEYER.

We Unterwalders are the first;
Our comrades are not come.

MELCHTHAL.

What time of the night
Is it?

BAUMGARTEN.

The watch at Selisberg hath called
The second hour.

[*The ringing of a bell is heard in the distance.*

MEYER.

Hearken—be still! the forest-chapel's chime
Rings clearly here from Switz.

VON DER FLÜE.

The air is pure,
And carries from afar the sound.

MELCHTHAL.

Go ye,
Kindle a brushwood fire against they come.

[*Two peasants go.*

SEWA.

'Tis a beautiful moonlight night. The lake
Lies clear as 'twere a mirror.

AM BÜHEL.

As tranquil too;
Short passage will they have.

WINKELRIED (*points to the lake*).

Ha! ha! look yonder—
Do you see! What hangs above the lake?

MEYER.

Ay,
I see! It is a rainbow in the night.

MELCHTHAL.

'Tis caused
By falling of the moonlight on the spray.

VON DER FLUE.

It is an omen strange and wonderful;
The like I never saw.

SEWA.

'Tis doubled now;
A paler arch bends round the former one.

BAUMGARTEN.

See! a boat gliding yonder o'er the lake.

MELCHTHAL.

'Tis Stauffacher, I'll wager. Let us go
To the shore to meet him.

[*Goes with* BAUMGARTEN *to the shore.*

MEYER.

The men of Uri
Are last.

AM BÜHEL.

Yes; they some secret path must find
Circuitously through the hills, to avoid
All cause of suspicion to the governor.

[*Meanwhile the two peasants have kindled a fire.*

MELCHTHAL (*on the shore*).

The pass-word! Quick; who's there?

STAUFFACHER (*from the boat*).

Our country's friends.

[*All go down to meet the new-comers.*

STAUFFACHER, ITEL REDING, HANS AUF DER MAUER, JÖRG IM HOFE, KONRAD HUNN, ULRIC DER SCHMIDT, JOST VON WEILER, *with three other Peasants, land, fully armed.*

ALL (*cry out*).

Welcome!

[*While the rest are talking together,* MELCHTHAL *and* STAUFFACHER *come forward.*

MELCHTHAL.

O Stauffacher! I have seen *him*
Who ne'er can see me more! I have laid my hand
Upon his sightless eyes, and by the light
That ne'er shall visit them, have sworn revenge,
Deadly and bitter.

STAUFFACHER.

Speak not of revenge!
Not to revenge past evil have we met,
But to avert the wrongs that are to come.
What have you done in Unterwald? what aid?
What friends are reckoned for the common cause?
How did the peasantry receive your words?
How, above all, escaped you treachery?

MELCHTHAL.

Through the wild mountains of Surenne, where
Trackless plains of ice are stretched as far
As eye can reach, and the vulture's croaking cry
Is the full sound that breaks the fearful stillness—
Through these I passed, till I reached the valley where,
From Uri and from Engelberg, the shepherds
Come to exchange their greetings, and to feed
Their flocks together. Here I quenched my thirst
With the pure spring that gushed from out the rocks,
And rested me in solitary huts,
Where I was guest and host, until I came.
Unto the civilised abodes of men.
Echoing through all these valleys was the cry
Of the fresh cruelty that had been wrought,
And all the shepherds among whom I passed
Shewed kind and pious reverence for my grief.
High indignation in their untaught souls
The oppressions of our governors had raised;
For as from year to year plants of like kind
Are nourished on our Alps; as the same streams
Flow on without impediment, and storms
And tempests gather o'er our noble mountains,
Even as they gathered centuries ago;
So ancient customs here from sire to son
Are handed down unchanged. Strong is the power
They bear throughout our land, and hard the struggle
Will be ere simple shepherds learn t' endure
A change. With their hard hands they welcomed me,
Lifting their rusty swords from off the walls;
And when I spoke the names that are beloved
By all the shepherds on the hills, your own
And Walter Fürst's, their eyes beamed bright with hope
And joyful courage; and they swore to do

All that you said was right—in life and death,
They swore to follow you. From house to house,
Protected by their friendly care, I passed;
And when I came unto my native vale,
Where all my kindred dwell, and when I found
My father robbed of all, lying on a bed
Of straw, subsisting on the charity
Of those who pitied him—

STAUFFACHER.

O God of heaven!

MELCHTHAL.

I did not weep: no, not with fruitless tears
Did I pour forth the anguish of my wrongs,
But deep within my breast I buried it,
Locked it as 'twere some hidden priceless treasure;
There now it lies, urging me on to deeds,
And restless till by deeds it is avenged.
I visited all the pathways of the mountains;
No valley was so lone but I explored it,
Till at the glacier's icy feet I stood,
And found e'en there the dwelling-place of man.
Where'er my footsteps carried me I found
The hate of tyranny; for to the last
Rude boundary of nature, where the earth
Refuses to bring forth her produce, there
Our governor's cruel avarice had reached.
The peasants' hearts beat high at the tales I told;
They vowed with their life's blood to stand by us.

STAUFFACHER.

Much have you done, and in brief space.

MELCHTHAL.

Listen
Yet farther,—more I've done: the fortresses
Of Rossberg and of Sarnen, so much feared,
Because behind their stern high walls our foes
Protect themselves, and desolate the land—
You know them well: I fain would look on them,
And went to Sarnen—

STAUFFACHER.

Within the tiger's den
You ventured not?

MELCHTHAL.

Clothed in a pilgrim's garb,
I watched the revels of the Governor—
Burning with rage, I saw my enemy,
Yet slew him not.

STAUFFACHER.

'Twas well, or you had not survived
To tell the services you've done.

[*In the mean time* MELCHTHAL'S *companions approach him and* STAUFFACHER.

But say,
Who are these men that follow you? I pray you
Make us acquainted, that with open hearts
We may consult together of our cause.

MEYER.

What man is there within our cantons, sir,
That knows you not? Meyer of Sarnen I;
This is my sister's son, Von Winkelried.

STAUFFACHER.

The names you bear are not unknown to me.
A Winkelried it was who slew the dragon
In the bog by Weiler, and who lost his life
In the fierce struggle.

WINKELRIED.

'Twas my ancestor.

MELCHTHAL (*points to two peasants*).

These dwell behind the wood at Engelberg.
They are labourers, not freemen; but they love
Our cause, and are respected in the land.

STAUFFACHER (*to both*).

Give me your hands! Happy the man who owes
No bonded service to an earthly master;
But honesty in any rank is noble.

KONRAD HUNN.

This is Herr Reding.

MEYER.

Ha! I know him well:
He is my enemy at law; we both
Lay claim to the same estate; but here
We are friends. [*He shakes him by the hand.*

STAUFFACHER.

'Tis spoken well, and nobly.

WINKELRIED.

Hear ye? they come!—hear ye the horn of Uri?

[*Right and left, armed men descend the crags with lanterns.*

AUF DER MAUER.

See! yonder comes the pious man of God,
Our worthy pastor, Rösselmann,—not night
Nor the wild rugged path has held him back;
He tends his sheep as a good shepherd doth.

BAUMGARTEN.

The Sacristan and Walter Fürst are there;
But yet I see not Tell.

WALTER FÜRST, RÖSSELMANN *the Priest*, PETERMANN *the Sacristan*, KUONI *the Herdsman*, WERNI *the Huntsman*, RUODI *the Fisherman, with five others—altogether, thirty-three in number—press forwards and stand round the fire.*

WALTER FÜRST.

Thus must we steal—
In our own land—on our paternal soil—
Forth at the dead of night, whose mantle black
Is used to screen such deeds as fear the sun,
To question and uphold our own just rights,
Which are as bright and clear as light of day.

MELCHTHAL.

That which is woven in the darkest night
Looks bright and glorious in the light of heaven:
So shall our project prove.

RÖSSELMANN.

My people, hear
What God hath put into my heart: we stand
Confederate council of our realm, to enact
Deeds for our country's good; in all we do
Let us abide by the customs of our land,
And what may yet be wanting in our bond
The dangers of the time may well excuse.
O'er all assemblies of the just God reigns,
And underneath His heaven we stand this night.

STAUFFACHER.

Let us begin according to old customs:
Although the hour is dark, our rights are clear.

MELCHTHAL.

Though the number of our council be not perfect,
The heart of Switzerland, her heart's best friends,
Are here.

KONRAD HUNN.

And if the ancient deeds are absent,
What matter?—they are written in our hearts.

RÖSSELMANN.

So be it;—form the circle—plant the swords,
With their points outwards, in the ground!

THE SACRISTAN.

The chiefs
Of three respective states are we: from which
Shall a president be chosen for our council?

MEYER.

Switz may contend with Uri for the right;
We men of Unterwald resign all claim.

MELCHTHAL.

And we—we are the weakest, and require
Help from our stronger friends.

STAUFFACHER.

To Uri, then, belongs the sword; her banner
Shall lead our troops to battle.

WALTER FÜRST.

The sword of honour should be given to Switz,
For from her noble race all we are sprung.

RÖSSELMANN.

Let me the generous contest end. In the field
Shall Uri be the chief; in council, Switz.

WALTER FÜRST (*offers* STAUFFACHER *the sword*).

Receive from me this noble trust.

STAUFFACHER.

Not I;
To the oldest man among us it is right
Such honour should be given.

IM HOFE.

Ulric the smith
Numbers most years of any man among us.

AUF DER MAUER.

He is a brave man, but he is not free:
No bondman can be judge in Switzerland.

STAUFFACHER.

Is not Herr Reding here, the Landamman?
Where can we find a worthier man than he?

WALTER FÜRST.

He, then, shall be our chief. Let those who vote
With me raise up their hands as in consent.
[*All hold up their right hands.*

REDING (*comes forward into the midst*).

I cannot lay my hand upon a book,
But I will swear by the eternal stars
That I will ne'er forsake the paths of justice.
[*Two swords are set up before him; the ring is formed around him. In the middle stand the men of Switz; to the right, Uri; and to the left, Unterwald. He stands leaning on his sword.*
What purpose now has led our mountain clans
To meet together at the spirit-hour,
Here on the lonely shore of this wild lake?
What will the object be of this new bond
Which we shall make beneath the stars of heaven?

STAUFFACHER (*comes within the circle*).

We swear to no new bond, it is an old
And honoured covenant which our fathers made,
That we would now renew. Friends and allies!
Although the lake, although the mountains high
Our clans divide, and each hath separate rule,
Still are we one, still is our blood the same;
We have one fatherland.

WINKELRIED.

Say, is it true,
As ancient legends tell, that we from far
Have wandered hither, that in distant lands
Our primal origin was known? Declare

All that you know of these events, that so
Our ancient covenant may receive fresh strength.

STAUFFACHER.

Hear, then, the ancient shepherd's tale:—In times
Long past, there lived a nation tow'rds the north,
On whom fell grievous famine; in their need,
The people of the land resolved to choose
By lot one man of every tenth to quit
His native home. The lot was cast; and then
Husbands and wives and children weeping went,
A countless multitude, towards the south;
Making their way by sword through Germany,
They came into these mountains lone and wild;
Nor halted they, nor wearied in their course,
Until they came unto the desert vale,
Where the Muotta runs between two plains.
No trace of man was seen, only a tent
Stood on a lonely shore. There sat a man
Who watched the ferry; but the waves rose high—
They might not pass the lake; then looked they round
More nearly, and beheld the noble forests,
And the pure springs that gushed from out the earth,
And dreamt that in the fatherland they loved
They stood once more! Here, then, their hearts
Bade them remain, and here they lived, and built
The ancient town of Switz; and many days
Of weary labour toiled they in the woods,
To clear the ground of the thick trees, which grew
In wild luxuriance. When at length the earth
Yielded not produce for so large a people,
They spread them farther, and to Weissland went,
O'er the Black Mountains. There they astonished found,
Hidden beyond walls of eternal ice,
Another race, who spoke another tongue.
The town of Stanz then built they at Kernwald,
The town of Altdorf in the valley of Reuss;
Yet lived they mindful of their origin;
And amid all the foreign tribes that since
Have settled in our land, the Switzer knows
Those that in heart and blood his kindred are.

[*He joins hands with his companions.*

AUF DER MAUER.

Yes! we are all one heart, one blood, one race.

ALL (*joining hands*).

We are one people — we will act as one.

STAUFFACHER.

The other cantons bear a foreign yoke;
To the conqueror they have yielded. E'en within
Our landmarks some there were who homage owned
To a strange master. They this fealty left
Unto their children; but till now have we—
The noble race of ancient Switzerland—
Preserved our rights inviolate, and lived
Free as the hills on which we dwell. Our knees
Have never bowed to any foreign prince;
Freely we chose the emperor to be
Protector of our liberty.

RÖSSELMANN.

We chose
Freely the imperial guard and shield;
So stands it in the Emperor Frederic's writ.

STAUFFACHER.

For the most free are not without a lord.
A chief there must be — a high judge — to whom
Men may appeal for right in difference:
Therefore our fathers for the land they wrought
(As 'twere from out the wilderness) conferred
That right upon the emperor who rules
Over all Germany and Italy;
And as the other freemen of his kingdom
Commend themselves to him by warlike duty,
So this is the only duty of the free,
To fight for those who swear to fight for them.

MELCHTHAL.

All other terms of service are but bondage.

STAUFFACHER.

Our fathers, when the muster-call went forth,
Followed the emperor's banner — fought for him.
To Italy among his troops they went,
To set upon his head the crown that Rome
Bestowed. Peaceful at home, they kept unchanged

Their ancient customs and their ancient lands.
The highest penalty of blood alone
The emperor had power to inflict.
For this a judge was chosen year by year,
Who dwelt not in our realm. He, when such crime
Deserving penalty of blood was wrought,
Was summoned hither, and beneath the heaven
Serene and clear, which was our judgment-hall,
He spoke the sentence without fear of men.
Say—was there aught like slavery in this?
If any 'mongst you deems so, let him speak!

IM HOFE.

No; as you say, so think we all, and ne'er
Will pay forced homage.

STAUFFACHER.

Even to obey
The emperor we refused, when, for the sake
Of the priests, he did injustice. When the monks,
With the Abbot Gerhard, from Einsiedeln came
To claim 'gainst us a title to the Alps,
On which our herds had pasture found so long,
Shewing an ancient grant, which yielded them
The mountain waste—our very existence thus
Portioning out, and seeking to steal from us—
Then answered we—"Unlawful is the grant:
No emperor can deprive us of our own;
And if the realm refuse us justice, we
Henceforth renounce the league ourselves have made,
And without aid live freely on our mountains."
So spake our fathers; and shall *we* submit
To tyranny more shameful e'en than this?
Endure from foreign states, that are not free,
The bondage that an emperor hath not dared,
All-powerful as he is, to offer us?
We have *created* for ourselves this land;
By the labour of our hands the ancient woods,
Which were the abode of bears, have changed
Into fit dwelling-place for men; the brood
Of dragons have we slain; the poisonous swamps,
O'er which the fogs hung thick and damp, have cleared;
The hard stone-rock have pierced, and bridges thrown
Across the chasms and the mountain-streams.

For a thousand years this land hath been our own;
And shall a foreign tyrant weave us chains,
And do us outrage in our sacred homes?
Is there no help against such tyranny?

[*They press nearer to each other and to* STAUFFACHER.

Yes; there are limits to the tyrant's power.
When the oppressed can nowhere find redress,
And the burden of his wrongs has grown too great
To bear, then lifts he high his hands to heaven,
And seizes hold of that eternal justice
Which doth reside unalienably there,
Changeless and everlasting as the stars.
The old estate of nature comes again
When man receives not right from fellow-man;
As the last means, when every other fails,
The power of the sword is given into his hands.
Oh! shall we not defend our dearest goods
'Gainst unjust violence? Stand by our homes?
Fight for our wives — our children?

ALL (*clashing their swords*).

To our last breath
Will we defend them!

RÖSSELMANN (*comes into the circle*).

Pause ere you draw the sword; a peaceful bond
May yet be made. One simple easy word
May reconcile you to the emperor,
And they who now oppress will flatter you.
Accept the terms so often offered you;
Acknowledge Austria's supremacy.

AUF DER MAUER.

How! *We* swear allegiance to Austria?

AM BÜHEL.

Listen not to him.

WINKELRIED.

He is a traitor —
An enemy to our country.

REDING.

Comrades, peace!

SEWA.

*We* pay them fealty after so great wrong!

VON DER FLÜE.

*We* let them force from us through tyranny
What we refused to kindness!

MEYER.

We should then
Be slaves, and should deserve our slavery.

AUF DER MAUER.

He who suggests such servile covenant
Shall lose a Switzer's privilege. Let this
Be our first law in the bond we make to-night.

MELCHTHAL.

So let it be. For the future, they who speak
Of yielding to the Austrian tyrant lose
The heritage of their birth, and no free Switz
Receives the traitor to his hearth and home.

ALL (*raising their right hands*).

So let it be. We will acknowledge such
To be our law,

REDING (*after a pause*).

It is so.

RÖSSELMANN.

You have now
By your own deed decreed your liberty.
Never shall Austria obtain by force
The fealty for which she sued in vain.

JOST VON WEILER.

Now further to our cause!

REDING.

My comrades! say,
Has every gentler method yet been tried?
Perchance the emperor knows not of our wrongs;
It is not by his will that we have suffered.
One last resource there still remains for us—
Our grievances to carry to his throne
Before we take up arms. Fearful is war,
E'en in the holiest cause. God doth not help
Till human help is vain.

STAUFFACHER (*to* KONRAD HUNN).

The time is come
When you should aid our cause. Speak what you've seen.

KONRAD HUNN.

I went to Rheinfeld, to the emperor's palace,
To make some protest 'gainst the governor,
And fetch the ancient charters of our freedom,
Which are by each new emperor confirmed.
Men, sent from many cities, found I there—
From Swabia, and from the Rhenish towns—
Carrying the charters they had brought, confirmed,
And joyfully returning to their homes.
When I, *your* deputy, was received in council,
Far different was the answer I obtained:
"Until some future and more leisure time
The emperor wills your cause should be deferred."
Then as I sorrowfully passed the halls
Of the imperial palace, young Duke John
I saw stand weeping bitterly. The lords
Of Wart and Tägerfeld were by his side.
They called to me, and said—"Help you yourselves!
Expect not justice from the emperor:
Hath he not robbed his only brother's child,
And kept him from his just inheritance?
The duke asked from him but his own—the realm
Bequeathed him by his mother. He is now
Of age, and fit to govern; but the king,
Placing a chaplet on his head, exclaimed—
'Such is fit ornament for youth!'"

AUF DER MAUER.

You hear—
From the king expect not justice! help yourselves!

READING.

No other course remains to us, but to weigh
All means by which the struggle of our arms
We best can guide unto a prosperous issue.

WALTER FÜRST (*pressing forwards into the circle*).

We will cast off this hateful tyranny.
The ancient rights which from our ancestors
To us descended will we keep—not lay
An unjust claim to what is not our own;
Still to the emperor render what is his;
And let all those who own a feudal lord
Look well to serve him with their rightful duty.

MEYER.

*I* hold some land of Austria.

WALTER FÜRST.

Hold it still,
And yield her what is due.

JOST VON WEILER.

A tenant I
To the lords of Rapperswell.

WALTER FÜRST.

Remain you so,
And pay them that thou owest.

RÖSSELMANN.

My patron saint,
The Lady of Zurich, am I sworn to serve.

WALTER FÜRST.

Give to the Church what is her own.

STAUFFACHER.

I hold
No land save of the realm.

WALTER FÜRST.

Let what is due
Be rendered — nothing more. With their own vassals
Will we attack the governors, and break through
Their castle-walls; yet without shedding blood,
If that is possible. The emperor thus
Will see that 'twas necessity alone
Which bade us for a while renounce our duty;
And if we act with judgment and with prudence,
He will from policy restrain his wrath;
For justly is a nation to be feared
That e'en with sword in hand acts lawfully.

REDING.

But speak. How shall our first attack be made?
Our enemies have weapons in their hands,
And will not lay them down in peace.

STAUFFACHER.

They may,
If they behold us armed. We will make speed,
And fall upon them ere they are prepared.

MEYER.

'Tis easy said, more difficult to do:
Within our land stand two well-guarded castles,
And these, if the emperor take up arms against us,
Will hold out fearful shelter to the foe.
Rossberg and Sarnen must be vanquished ere
A man may draw his sword throughout our cantons.

STAUFFACHER.

If we delay our schemes so long, some rumour
Will reach the emperor's ears, and they will fail—
Too many now have knowledge of our secret.

MEYER.

No traitors are there in the Waldstetten!

RÖSSELMANN.

But zeal, no less than treachery, may betray
Our cause.

WALTER FÜRST.

If thus we hesitate, the dungeon
At Altdorf will be built, the governor's power
More difficult than ever to oppose.

MEYER.

You think but of yourselves.

SACRISTAN.

You are unjust!

MEYER (*angrily*).

Unjust! Dare you taunt Uri thus?

REDING.

My friends,
Peace for your oath's sake!

MEYER.

Ha! if Switz
Take part with Uri we may well be silent.

REDING.

I warn you, as you value our success,
Disturb not you our sacred league to-night
With vain dissensions among yourselves; all we
Have but one cause at heart—one interest.

WINKELRIED.

Let us delay until the holy feast,
When, by the ancient custom, all the serfs
Bring presents to the governor, so ten
Or twelve men mingled in the crowd might pass
Unnoticed through the gates. Let these sharp spikes
Bear with them secretly, which they may fix
Upon their staves; for no one holding arms
May be admitted. Hard by, in the wood,
A troop of armèd men shall lie in ambush;
So, if their comrades can possess the gates,
We may by signal summon them, and all
With force combined shall rush to the assault,
And haply win the castle from our foes.

MELCHTHAL.

I will engage to scale the walls of Rossberg:
Within the garrison I know a damsel
Whom with a few kind words I could persuade
To meet me on the walls, and let me down
A rope at night; I having scaled them,
Will quickly by the same means aid my friends.

REDING.

Is it the will of all that this be carried?

[*The majority hold up their hands.*

STAUFFACHER (*counts the numbers on each side*).

Twenty are there in favour of delay,
But twelve against it!

WALTER FÜRST.

If on the appointed day
The castles fall, from each to each shall burn
A signal-fire, and so the people's guard
In the chief towns of every clan shall rise;
And if the governor see us armed in earnest,
Believe me he will gladly leave the field,
Content if we will grant him peaceful convoy
To escape beyond the landmarks of our realm.

STAUFFACHER.

With Gessler only do I fear the struggle,
Surrounded with his well-trained guard of horse—
Blood will be shed before he leaves the field;
And even when expelled, he will be feared,

And justly, by the land. 'Twere perilous
To attack him, and more perilous still
To let him 'scape in freedom.

BAUMGARTEN.

Let me be
Stationed where'er the danger is most urgent.
I owe my life to Tell, and willingly
I'll venture mine in the service of his country.
My heart is free and light; the stain that threatened
To lie upon my honour is washed out.

REDING.

Time will bring counsel; wait a while in patience.
There is a moment fit for every deed,
Seek not to hasten this. But trust in God,
Whether in fighting or enduring. Wrong
Lasts not for ever! But the while we stand
Prolonging thus our nightly conference,
Above the highest mountains gleams the light
Which is the morning's watch-fire. Ere the day
Shall overtake us we will separate.

WALTER FÜRST.

Fear not, the night lies long upon the valleys.

[*They have all involuntarily taken off their hats, and they look silently at the dawning day.*

RÖSSELMANN.

By this pure light which greeteth our free breasts
Before it visits the abode of those
Who dwell far down in valleys, mid the stir
And tumult of their cities, let us swear
An oath for our new covenant. One clan,
Sacred and firm, of brothers will we prove,
Nor separate in danger or in want.

[*They repeat the words after him.*

We will be free, as were our forefathers,
And rather die than live in slavery. [*They repeat as before.*

* * * * * * *

We will confide in the providence of God,
And will not fear before the power of man.

[*They repeat as before, and embrace each other.*

STAUFFACHER.

Let each one now go silent on his way

Back to his home, his kindred, and his friends.
Let those who are shepherds tend their flocks, and bring
Them home to winter before Christmas; each
Gathering in silence new confederates!
What now must be endured, endure with patience;
Let the reckoning 'gainst the tyrant higher grow
And higher, till the day when all his guilt,
Committed 'gainst the state or 'gainst ourselves,
Shall be opposed with our united strength.
Let each one for a time restrain his vengeance;
For he who aids himself in his own cause
Commits a robbery against the state.

[*While they go off the stage on their different sides, the orchestra plays a majestic strain of music. The scene remains some time still open, shewing the sun rising over the distant icebergs.*

## ACT III. SCENE I.

*Court before* TELL'S *house. He is using a carpenter's axe;* HEDWIG *is busy in household work;* WALTER *and* WILHELM *are playing with a crossbow.*

WALTER (*sings*).

With his bow and arrows
The huntsman wends his way,
O'er the valleys and the hills,
At the dawning of the day.

Through all the realms of ether
The crowned eagle reigns;
And the cloud-capped crags and glaciers
Are the huntsman's free domains.

Through the free unbounded space
His glorious kingdom lies:
Oh, wide is the realm of the huntsman—
Wide as his arrow flies!

[*He holds up his bow, and comes leaping forwards.*
The string is broken; mend it for me, father.

TELL.

Not I: an archer ought to help himself.

HEDWIG.

Early enough have they begun to use
The bow.

TELL.

They must who would become true archers.

HEDWIG.

Ah, would to God they never learnt the art!

TELL.

They must learn all! who makes his way through life
Must be prepared, if needful, to attack,
As well as strike in his defence.

HEDWIG.

Will none
Remain at home content?

TELL.

Not I, for one;
Nature ne'er formed me for a shepherd's life!
Free as the prey I follow, I must roam.
I live on the free air, as well as the spoil
I bring.

HEDWIG.

And of the many sad and anxious thoughts
Of her who waits for you and mourns your absence,
You never think or care; whene'er I hear
The tales which your attendants tell of perils
That you have run in the chase, I faint with fear;
And my heart sinks within me, when you go,
Lest you return no more. While you are gone,
I see you wand'ring 'mong the wild ice-mountains,
Springing from cliff to cliff, missing your aim,
And plunging headlong to the abyss beneath;
Or else my fears do picture you o'erwhelmed
By mighty avalanche; or else the Firn,
Treacherous, gives way beneath you, and you sink
A living corpse into a fearful tomb.
Alas! to the huntsman on the Alps is death
Present in a hundred, thousand fearful forms;—
He comes not peaceful, as to those who dwell
In valleys. Oh, it is fearful that a man should gain
His daily bread in peril of his life!

TELL.

Who looks around him with clear eye and judgment,
And trusts in God and his own supple strength,
Bears himself well in every chance, and needs
To fear no danger. He who is born on the mountains
Should not fear them.

[*He finishes his work, and lays by his implement.*

Ha, my work will hold!
Carry an axe and spare a carpenter. [*He takes his cap.*

HEDWIG.

Where goest thou?

TELL.

To Altdorf, to your father.

HEDWIG.

You have some dangerous project in your mind—
Confess it?

TELL.

Why think you so?

HEDWIG.

Because some plot
Is being formed against the Governor;
I know that the conspirators have met
Upon the Rootli. You are in the league?

TELL.

I was not one of the confederates;
But ne'er will I be backward to reply
To the summons of my country, if it need
My aid.

HEDWIG.

Where'er the greatest danger is,
You will be stationed. Yours will be, as ever,
The hardest service.

TELL.

Of each one is required
According as his power to act may be.

HEDWIG.

A man of Unterwalden too, during the storm,
You carried across the lake; 'twas strange
You were not lost. Say, do you never think
Of your wife and children?

TELL.

Dear wife, I thought
Of you, and saved a father for his children.

HEDWIG.

T' embark in the raging sea in such a storm,
Is not to trust in God, but rather
To tempt His anger.

TELL.

He who thinks too much
Will act too little.

HEDWIG.

Oh, Tell! you are too kind,—
Giving aid and help to all, and when in need
Yourself, you will find none to grant it you.

TELL.

God grant that I may never need man's aid!

[*He takes his crossbow and arrows.*

HEDWIG.

Why do you take your crossbow?—leave it here.

TELL.

As well could I leave my arm as leave my bow.

[*The boys come towards him.*

WALTER.

Where are you going, father?

TELL.

To your grandsire,
To Altdorf. Wilt go with me?

WALTER.

Yes; gladly!

HEDWIG.

The Governor is there: go not to Altdorf!

TELL.

He goes away to-day.

HEDWIG.

Ah, let him first
Depart; throw not yourself in his path—you know
He hates us.

TELL.

His ill-will does me no harm:
I shall do right, and fear no enemy.

HEDWIG.

Those who do right he hates the most.

TELL.

Because
He has no pretext then, or power to harm them.
He will not injure me.

HEDWIG.

How know you that?

TELL.

It is not long ago I went to hunt
Through the wild valley of the Schächenwald;
Not the least trace or step of man was there,
As on a rugged path I wound my way
Through the steep rocks, where was no other road
Whereby he could avoid me. Over head
Hung rugged precipices, while beneath
The foaming waves the Schächen torrent rushed;
[*The boys press to his right and left hand, and look up at him with eager curiosity.*
When suddenly in a winding of the path
I met the Governor. He was alone
As I was—face to face we met—the torrent
Rushed through the abyss beneath. When we drew near,
He knew me as the man whom, short time since,
He had punished heavily for slight offence.
Pale he grew, and his knees shook for fear; he stood
Trembling upon the precipice's brink.
In pity for the terror that possessed him
I went to him, and with respectful voice
I said—"My lord, I am Tell!" but he no sound
Or word could utter. With his hand he signed
That I would speak no more, but go my way.
I went, and sent his followers to him.

HEDWIG.

Alas! he trembled in your presence. Ne'er
Will he forget that you have seen his weakness.

TELL.

I will avoid him, and he will not seek me.

HEDWIG.

Oh! stay one day, and then away from Altdorf!
Go rather to the hunt.

TELL.

What ails you, Hedwig?

HEDWIG.

I am filled with anguish. Oh, remain away!

TELL.

Why should you vex yourself without a cause?

HEDWIG.

Why will you go without a cause? Oh, Tell, stay here!

TELL.

I have given my word, dear wife, that I would go.

HEDWIG.

*Must* you? then go; yet leave the boys with me.

WALTER.

No, mother dear; for I go with my father.

HEDWIG.

What, Walter! and will you forsake your mother?

WALTER.

Dear mother, something will I bring you back;
Something you'll like from Altdorf. [*Exit with his father.*

WILHELM.

I'll stay with you.

HEDWIG.

That's my best child. You are the only one
Left to me now that they are gone.

[*She goes to the door of the court, and follows her Husband and Walter a long time with her eyes.*

## SCENE II.

*Lonely wild forest-ground. Little brooks falling in spray over the rocks.*

BERTHA *in a hunting-dress; she is followed by* RUDENZ.

BERTHA.

He follows me. Now, in this lonely forest,
Will I tell the thoughts that long have filled my heart.

RUDENZ (*following her quickly*).

Lady, at length we are alone together;
On all sides precipices close us in.
I fear no witness in this wilderness:
From its long silence I must free my heart.

BERTHA.

Think you the hunt will follow us?

RUDENZ.

Not here.
The hunters are in a different track—
Far off. Ah! now this hour, that I have dreaded,
Yet so much longed for, must decide my fate,
E'en though it be to part that fate from you.
Oh, turn not thou thy gentle eyes from me,
As if in scorn! Say not I am too bold
To lift my thoughts to thee! I know that fame
Hath spoken not my deeds. I may not rank
With those brave knights who seek to win thy love.
I can but give a heart of love and truth.

BERTHA.

Can he dare speak to me of love and truth,
Who has forsaken his most holy duty—
The slave of Austria, who has sold himself
To the foreign tyrant of his country?

RUDENZ.

And must I suffer this reproach from you?
But one good did I seek from Austria:
Lady, it was yourself!

BERTHA.

And did you think
To find me on the side of treachery?
Rather the tyrant Gessler would I wed,
Than the unnatural son of Switzerland,
Who has forsworn his true allegiance—
His country's cause.

RUDENZ.

O God! what do I hear?

BERTHA.

What by a good man should be held more dear,
*So* dear, as his country—his own people?
What nobler duties for a noble heart
Than to be a protector of the innocent—
To uphold the right of them that are oppressed?
I am a woman, and I cannot aid them;
But my soul bleeds for your much-injured people.

My love is theirs; their sufferings are mine:
So humble are they, yet so strong. My heart
Is bound more closely with them day by day;
Each day I learn to venerate them more.
But you, whom nature and chivalric right
Alike have destined for their guardian,
Yet have abandoned your most holy trust,
And woven fetters for your native land,
Forsaking those for whom you should have died.
Rudenz, the heart that would have loved you, grieves
That you have rather given it cause to hate you.

RUDENZ.

Do I not, then, desire my country's good?
'Neath Austria's sceptre I would give it peace.

BERTHA.

'Tis slavery, and not peace, that you would give.
From the last refuge left to it on earth
You would exile the best gift Heaven bestows —
The freedom of your people. More wisely they
Have judged of their own happiness. No dream,
No false ambition, blinds their surer sense;
But your own hands have veiled your willing eyes.

RUDENZ.

Bertha, you hate me! you despise me!

BERTHA.

Ah,
Rudenz, if I did, 'twere better! But to see
Him you would fain have loved, despised,
And worthy of contempt——

RUDENZ.

Bertha! Bertha!
For a moment you unveil the joy of heaven,
Then plunge me back into the deepest grief.

BERTHA.

It is with pain I grieve you. In your heart
The germ of what is noble is not dead;
'Tis only withered, and may spring again.
Strange power you must have exercised to quench
The virtue native to your race. 'Tis well
That it has proved more mighty than your will;

And, spite of your endeavours, yet remains
To make you good and noble.

RUDENZ.

O Bertha,
You will trust me! For your love I would be
All that you wished.

BERTHA.

Be that which Nature made you;
Act well the part she destined you to fill:
Stand by your people and your father-land,
And combat for their holy right.

RUDENZ.

Alas!
How can I win the treasure of your hand,
If I submit not to the emperor's power?
It is the will of your kindred, not your own,
That shall dispose your future destiny.

BERTHA.

In the Waldstetten lies my heritage;
And I am free while Switzerland is free.

RUDENZ.

How fair the prospect of my future life
Opens before me at your words!

BERTHA.

Hope not
Through Austria's favour to obtain my hand:
They would seize hold on my inheritance
To win a greater. This desire for land,
Which would destroy your liberty, doth threaten
Also mine. O Rudenz, I am destined,
Unwilling victim, to reward the hand
Of some perchance unworthy favourite;
And they will drag me to the emperor's court,
Which is the abode of falsehood and deceit,
To wear the chains of some most hated marriage:
Love only—yours—can save me from my fate!

RUDENZ.

And could you choose this for your dwelling-place,
And be my own in this my native land?

O Bertha, all my longings to depart
Into the world sprang but from love of you!
In the paths of glory 'twas but you I sought.
Ambition is another name for love:
I had not striven if I had not loved.
Could you with me in this still valley dwell,
Renouncing all the splendour of the earth,
Oh, then the object of my toil is gained!
Then may the stream of the tumultuous world
Flow on by me unheeded, and its waves
Beat on the bulwarks of our native home:
No vague or wild ambition have I more
To wander forth into the busy world.
Then may these rocks around us high uplift
Their impenetrable walls; and our abode,
Blest beyond all the dwellings of the earth,
Be open only to the light of heaven.

BERTHA.

Now art thou all my dreams had pictured thee:
My faith in thee was not deceived.

RUDENZ.

Begone,
O vain ambition, that beguiled my sense!
For life within my native land has spread
For me with gentlest hand her choicest blessings.
Here, where my boyhood passed—where every stream
And tree are known to me, and dear as friends—
Where joy has left a thousand airy footsteps,—
In my own fatherland wilt thou be mine!
So dearly do I love it, that I feel,
How great soe'er my bliss, apart from it
Something had failed me to complete my joy.

BERTHA.

Where shall we seek the islands of the blest,
If not in the land of innocence, where truth
And ancient faith have made their dwelling-place—
Where falsehood never yet hath ventured—
Where envy poisons not the source of joy,
And life's sweet moments pass untroubled by?
Here shall I see thee proud in manly worth,

First of the free among the free, honoured
With pure free homage.

RUDENZ.

There see I thee, the fairest among women,
Arrayed in many a sweet and feminine charm,
Create for me a heaven within my home;
And, as the spring its blossoms strews around,
Adorn life's paths for me with grace and joy,
Blessing the very air in which thou dwellest!

BERTHA.

You marvel, then, no more that I should grieve
To see you with your own rash hand destroy
The picture of a life so beautiful.
Alas! how sad had been my lot, if fate
Had given my hand to some proud knight, and borne
My steps unto his dark and drear abode!
No cold, stern castle-walls stand here to sunder
My home from theirs whom I would fain make happy.

RUDENZ.

But how to save myself—to loose the bonds
Which my own folly round my path has cast?

BERTHA.

Tear them apart with manly resolution;
And happen then what may, stand firm, and guard
Your country's good. Such part has been by God
Assigned you to fulfil.

[*A hunting-horn is heard in the distance. The hunt draws nearer.*

Hark! We must part. Fight for your father-land,
And you will fight for me. One cause is ours:
We tremble both before one enemy.
It is our freedom that shall make us free.

[*Exeunt.*

## Scene III.

*Meadow near Altdorf. In the foreground are trees; in the background a hat upon a pole. The prospect is bounded by the Bannberg, over which rise the mountains covered with snow.*

Friesshardt *and* Leuthold *keep watch.*

FRIESSHARDT.

Our pains are all for nothing — not a soul
Goes by this way: they take care t' avoid
This scarecrow on the pole. A market-place
This square was yesterday: 'tis now a desert.

LEUTHOLD.

Only a few of the rabble come and toss
Their ragged caps, mocking our *noble guard.*
All honest folks would rather make a circuit
Of half the town than bow before a hat.

FRIESSHARDT.

When they go home from the council-hall at noon
They must pass by this way. I take it, then
We shall have a net of fish, for none will think
To greet the hat. When Rösselmann the priest
Saw it, returning from a sick man's house,
Bearing the eucharist, he stood in front
Of the pole, the sacrist rung his bell, and all
Knelt down, myself among them, but to greet
The host, and not this cap.

LEUTHOLD.

My friend, it seems
To me we stand in a sort of pillory.
It is a shameful duty for a soldier
To stand as guard before an empty hat;
Even the serfs might scorn us for our pains.
Faith, 'tis a foolish order, and we share
The folly.

FRIESSHARDT.

Why not bow to an empty hat?
You've often bowed ere now to an empty head.

Hildegard, Mechthild, *and* Elsbeth *approach with children, and stand before the pole.*

LEUTHOLD.

You are a villain, if you try to bring
These honest folks to trouble; I'll shut my eyes;
And if they pass the hat, they may; for I'll not see them.

MECHTHILD.

There hangs the Governor,—d'ye see him?
Boys, pay him respect.

ELSBETH.

Would to God he'd go
And leave us his hat, 'twould govern better
Than the head that wore it!

FRIESSHARDT (*drives them away*).

Begone, ye fools!
Who asked for you? Go send your husbands here:
See if they dare despise the Governor.

[*Exeunt women and children.*

TELL *with his crossbow, and leading his son* WALTER *by the hand; they go past the hat without noticing it, to the front part of the scene.*

WALTER (*pointing to the Bannberg*).

Father, is't true, upon the mountain yonder,
That if you cut them with an axe, from the tree
The blood will flow?

TELL.

Who told you that, my boy?

WALTER.

Kuoni the master herdsman; for the trees
Were charmed, he said, and whoso harmed them,
His hand should rest not in his grave.

TELL.

The trees
Are charmed, 'tis true, my boy. See'st thou the Firn
With white horns rising to the heavens?

WALTER.

Those
Are the glaciers where the thunder lives;
'Tis they which send the avalanches down.

TELL.

So 'tis: the avalanches had long since destroyed

The town of Altdorf, if those forest-trees
Had not stood up like a rampart or a guard,
And shielded it.

WALTER (*after some reflection*).

Say, father, are there countries without mountains?

TELL.

Yes; if a man go downwards from our hills,
Following the current of the mountain-streams,
He'll reach at last a wide and level plain,
Where the wild torrents rush not through the woods,
But wander peaceful through luxuriant fields;
The corn grows there in wide and beauteous pastures,
And the whole face of the land is like a garden.

WALTER.

Father, why dwell we not in that fair clime,
Rather than toil and suffer here?

TELL.

The land
Is beautiful, and bounteous as Heaven;
But those who till it never may enjoy
The seed which they have planted.

WALTER.

Dwell they not
Free men, like you, upon their own estates?

TELL.

Their fields belong to the bishop and the king.

WALTER.

May they not go hunt among the forests?

TELL.

To their lord belong the forests and the game.

WALTER.

At least they may fish freely in the streams?

TELL.

The stream, the sea, the lake, belong to the king.

WALTER.

Who is this *king* whom all men fear?

TELL.

He is one
Who grants them his protection and support.

WALTER.

Are they so weak they cannot protect themselves?

TELL.

Yes; for there man dares not trust his fellow.

WALTER.

I could not live in that land, however fair;
I'd rather dwell under the avalanche.

TELL.

Far better is't, my boy, to have behind you
An iceberg, than a man you cannot trust.

[*They are going by.*

WALTER.

Father, there is a hat upon the pole!

TELL.

What matters the hat to us?—let us begone!

[*As he is going on, Friesshardt goes towards him with his pike lowered.*

FRIESSHARDT.

Halt! and surrender in the emperor's name.

TELL (*lays hold of the pike*).

What would you have with me? Why do you stop me?

FRIESSHARDT.

You've broken the Governor's orders; follow me.

LEUTHOLD.

You have not paid your reverence to the hat.

TELL.

Friend, let me go.

FRIESSHARDT.

Yes; go you may—to prison!

WALTER.

To prison! Father, do not go to prison!

[*He calls to people in the distance.*

Here! come! for God's sake, come and help! make haste!
They are carrying him to jail! Oh, help!

RÖSSELMANN *the Priest, and* PETERMANN *the Sacristan, come by, with three other men.*

SACRISTAN.

What is it?

RÖSSELMANN.

Why lay you hands upon this man?

FRIESSHARDT.

He is an enemy to the emperor;—
A traitor!

TELL (*indignantly*).

*That* I am not.

RÖSSELMANN.

You are wrong, my friend:
He is Tell, a just and worthy citizen.

WALTER (*he sees* WALTER FÜRST, *and runs to meet him*).

Grandfather, help! They carry him away.

FRIESSHARDT.

To prison—away with him!

WALTER FÜRST (*hastening towards them*).

I will give surety. Halt!
Speak, for God's sake! Tell, say what thou hast done.

*Enter* MELCHTHAL *and* STAUFFACHER.

FRIESSHARDT.

The supreme power of the Governor
He hath contemned, and will not recognise.

STAUFFACHER.

Has Tell done that?

MELCHTHAL.

Knave, 'tis a lie!

LEUTHOLD.

He has not paid
Obeisance to the hat, which the Governor
Has set up.

WALTER FÜRST.

Why should he go to prison?
Let me be surety, and let him go free.

FRIESSHARDT.

Keep you your surety for yourself; we do
What is our duty. Soldiers, away with him!

MELCHTHAL (*to the people*).

By heaven! 'tis crying shame; we will not stand
And let them boldly thus lead him away
Before our very eyes.

SACRISTAN.

We are the strongest,
And will not suffer it. Friends, we will join
And rescue Tell.

FRIESSHARDT.

Who is it dares resist
The orders of the Governor?

THREE MORE PEASANTS (*hastening up to him*).

We'll help.
What is it? To the ground with them!

*Re-enter* HILDEGARD, MECHTHILD, *and* ELSBETH.

TELL.

Go;
I will defend myself: away, good people!
Think you, if I wished to be free by force of arms,
That I should fear their lances?

MELCHTHAL (*to* FRIESSHARDT).

Now—rescue him!
If you can, if you dare, from our protection!

WALTER FÜRST *and* STAUFFACHER.

Peace! Silence!

FRIESSHARDT (*cries out*).

Murder! uproar! a revolt!

[*Hunting-horns are heard.*

WOMEN.

Here comes the Governor!

FRIESSHARDT (*still louder*).

Murder! revolt!

STAUFFACHER.

Cry on, wretch; and let none hear you till your breath
Shall burst your body.

RÖSSELMANN *and* MELCHTHAL.

Wilt hold thy tongue, thou knave!

FRIESSHARDT (*louder still*).

Help—help! servants! attendants!—here!

WALTER FÜRST.

Here is the Governor—alas! alas!
What will become of us?

GESSLER *on horseback with a falcon on his wrist.* RUDOLPH DER HARRAS, BERTHA, *and* RUDENZ, *with a company of armed attendants, who form a circle round the staje.*

RUDOLPH DER HARRAS.

Place—place for the Governor!

GESSLER.

Disperse the people. Why do they throng together?
Who called for help? [*Every one is silent.*
Who was it? I will know.
[*To* FRIESSHARDT.
Come forwards. Who are you? Why have you bound
that man? [*He gives the falcon to a servant.*

FRIESSHARDT.

My noble lord, I am your man-at-arms,
And faithful kept my guard before the hat;
This man I seized in the act as he refused
Obeisance; and when, as you commanded,
I bade the attendants carry him to prison,
The people would have rescued him.

GESSLER (*after a pause*).

And dost thou so despise thy emperor, Tell,
And me, who am commander in his stead,
That thou refusest honour to the hat
By which I made of your obedience proof?
Thy evil thoughts thou hast betrayed to me.

TELL.

Pardon me, gracious lord, from thoughtless mind
My error sprang, not from contempt of you.
Were I considerate, I were not Tell.
I pray you grace for this, and will offend
No more.

GESSLER.

You're master of the crossbow, Tell.
Men say yours is the surest aim in Switz.

WALTER.

'Tis true, my lord, my father can strike an apple
From the tree at a hundred paces.

GESSLER.

Tell,
Is the lad yonder your son?

TELL.

He is, my lord.

GESSLER.

And have you other children?

TELL.

Another boy,
My lord.

GESSLER.

Which of the two lovest thou the best?

TELL.

My lord, they are both equally dear to me.

GESSLER.

Now, Tell, since thou canst strike with such sure aim
An apple from the tree, so shalt thou prove thy art
Here in my presence. Take thy famed crossbow—
Thou hast it ready—and prepare thy aim
To shoot an apple from the head of thy boy;
But take my counsel, draw thy bow with care;
For sure as thine arrow striketh not the mark
At the first blow, thou forfeitest thy head.

[*All make signs of horror.*

TELL.

My lord, what fearful and unheard-of thing
Is it that you require of me? *I* aim
At the head of my own child! It cannot be.
No, no, my gracious lord; I did mistake
Your words. God, in His grace, forbid that you
Could make such sport of a father's love.

GESSLER.

You heard
Me rightly—I require the deed: to strike
An apple from the head of the lad, your son.

TELL.

I with my crossbow aim at the dear head
Of my own son? My lord, I would rather die!

GESSLER.

Either thou takest aim, or both shall die;
Thou with thy son.

TELL.

Shall I be murderer
Of my own child? O! sir; you have no child,—
And do not know the depths of a father's heart!

GESSLER.

Why, Tell, you have belied your character:
They said you were a strange enthusiast,
Who had not the same thoughts as other men,
You love what is uncommon; and, to suit
Your humour, have I sought for you a venture
E'en to your heart's content. Another man
Might well reflect; but you can shut your eyes,
And think not twice before you take your aim.

BERTHA.

O sir! from my heart I pray you make not sport
Of these poor men. See how they trembling stand,
Pale e'en as death! They cannot comprehend
So sad a jest.

GESSLER.

How say you—that I jest?
[*He catches an apple from the tree that hangs over him.*
Here is an apple—there, make room! let him take
His distance as is custom; eighty paces
I'll give to him—not fewer and not more: he boasts
That at a hundred he can hit his mark.—
Now, archer, draw, and fail not of your aim.

RUDOLPH DER HARRAS.

God, 'tis no jest! fall down, my boy, and pray
The Governor to spare your life.

WALTER FÜRST (*to* MELCHTHAL, *who can scarcely contain his wrath*).

Oh, stay!
I pray you, calm yourself!

BERTHA (*to the Governor*).

Sir, 'tis enough;
It were inhuman farther to make jest
Of a father's anguish. Could this unhappy man
Have forfeited body and life for such slight fault,
He has already felt a thousand deaths.
Oh, send him, then, unharmed back to his home!

He has learned to know you: of this past hour
Will his children and his children's children tell.

GESSLER.

Open the way there!—quick!—Why dost thou wait?
Thy life is forfeited. I could kill thee,
And yet I give thee grace, and lay thy fate
In thy own skilful hands.—He cannot urge
Complaint against that sentence as unjust
That makes him master of his fate.—You boast
Of your sure aim—it may be not without cause;
And now it becomes you, archer, to make trial
Of this same skill: noble's the aim, and great
The prize. To hit the target in the goal
Is a thing that any man might do; but he
Is truly master of his art who ne'er
Will let his heart disturb his hand or eye.

WALTER FÜRST (*throws himself down before him*).

My lord, we know, we recognise
Your power; but oh, let mercy conquer justice!
Take the half of all I have—take all;
But let a father escape this fearful doom.

WALTER TELL.

My grandsire, kneel not thou to that false man!
Say, where shall I stand?—I am not afraid.
My father strikes a bird upon the wing:
He will not harm his child.

STAUFFACHER.

My lord, feel you
No pity for this innocent child?

RÖSSELMANN.

Oh, think,
There is a God in heaven, before whose throne
You will stand to answer for your deeds!

GESSLER (*points to the boy*).

Ho!
Attendants there, bind the boy to yon lime.

WALTER TELL.

Bind me, my lord! no, I will not be bound.
I will be still as a lamb, I will not breathe;

But if you bind me, I cannot—I should struggle
Against my bonds.

RUDOLPH DER HARRAS.

Let them bind your eyes, my boy.

WALTER.

Why bind my eyes? think you I am afraid
Of an arrow from my father's hand?—no,
I will stand firm—I will not wink my eye.—
Quick, father; shew them that you are an archer.
He believes you not, he thought to kill me;
Shoot! you will win, spite of his tyranny.

[*He goes to the lime-tree, and they lay an apple on his head.*

MELCHTHAL (*to the peasants*).

What!
Shall such a deed be done before our eyes?
Where is the league we swore to?

STAUFFACHER.

'Twere in vain—
We are unarmed! see yonder crowd of lances?

MELCHTHAL.

Oh that e'er now we had carried our schemes to deeds!
God forgive those who chose delay!

GESSLER (*to* TELL).

To work!
Men do not carry weapons to no purpose.
'Tis sometimes dangerous to bear deadly weapons;
The arrow may be turned against the archer.
And this proud right, which the peasants do assume,
Offends the highest nobles of the land.
No one shall carry arms but at our bidding.
It is your will to carry a bow and arrows;
It is my will to find a mark for you.

TELL (*bends the bow and draws out an arrow*).

Free space there!—room!

STAUFFACHER.

What, Tell, you will?—yet, no;
You tremble—your hand shakes, and your knees sink.

TELL (*lets the crossbow fall*).

Every thing swims before my eyes!

WOMEN.

O God!

TELL (*to the Governor*).

Ask not of me this deed—here is my heart!
[*He bares his breast.*
Call to your horsemen—I am ready to die.

GESSLER.

I do not want your life—I'll have your shot.
You can do every thing, Tell—you fear nothing:
You are alike master of the bow and rudder;
You do not fear the storm in rescuing others;
And now let him that helps all others help
Himself.

[TELL *stands in a fearful struggle, with his hands clasped, and his eager eyes turned first upon heaven, then upon the Governor. Suddenly he seizes his quiver, takes from it a second arrow, and places it in his belt. The Governor remarks all his actions.*

WALTER TELL (*under the lime-tree*).

Shoot, father! I am not afraid!

TELL.

I must!
[*He collects himself, and takes aim.*

RUDENZ (*who has been all the time standing by restraining his indignation with the greatest difficulty, goes forward*).

My lord, you cannot carry this trial farther—
By Heaven, you shall not! If 'twas but a trial,
Your end's attained. Severity,
When urged too far, is cruelty: the bow
That's bent too far will break.

GESSLER.

Be silent, sir,
Till you are called upon.

RUDENZ.

I will, I *must* speak!
The honour of the king is dear to me
As my life's blood; but rule like this is not
His will. 'Tis cruelty! and in your presence
I'll dare declare it; and the like my people

Deserve not, nor do you commission hold
From the king to inflict it.

GESSLER.

Ha, you are bold!

RUDENZ.

Till now
I've watched your deeds, and have not spoken; my eyes
That saw them I have tried to close; my heart,
That with a thousand rebel feelings swelled,
I have compelled to silence: but yet longer
To bear this tyranny would treason be
Against my emperor—my fatherland.

BERTHA (*throws herself between him and the Governor*).

O God! you will but make his wrath more deadly.

RUDENZ.

My people I forsook, my friends, my kindred,
All natural bonds I tore apart, to link
Myself with you; I thought that to make firm
The emperor's power was the part required
Of me and of my people; but the blind
Has fallen from my eyes. Shuddering, I see
The abyss o'er which I stand. My judgment you
Have led astray, my heart deceived; and I,
Unknowing sought to work my country's ruin,
While I desired its good.

GESSLER.

Rash boy, do words
Like these befit you when you address your lord?

RUDENZ.

The emperor is my lord—not you. I am born
Free as yourself, and would contend with you
In every knightly duty. Stood you not
Here in the emperor's name,—the which I honour,
Howe'er it be abused,—I'd throw my glove
Down at your feet, and you should give to me
The answer of a knight. Ay, you may sign,
'Tis true, unto your horsemen; but I stand
Not weaponless, as *these:* [*Pointing to the people.*
I have a sword;
And he who dares—

STAUFFACHER (*calls out*).

The apple has fallen!

[*While all draw near to those who are speaking, and* BERTHA *has thrown herself between* RUDENZ *and the Governor,* TELL *has shot the arrow.*

RÖSSELMANN.

And the boy lives!

MANY VOICES.

He has struck the apple!

[WALTER FÜRST *trembles, and is ready to sink;* BERTHA *supports him.*

GESSLER (*astonished*).

What! he has shot? The madman!

BERTHA.

The boy is living. Come to yourself, good father.

WALTER TELL (*springs forward with the apple*).

Here is the apple, father. Well I knew
You would not harm your child.

TELL *stands leaning forwards, as if he would follow the arrow; the bow sinks in his hand as he sees the boy coming; he hastens to him with outstretched arms, and presses him with eager embraces to his heart; and then sinks powerless on the ground. All stand by in the deepest emotion.*

BERTHA.

Merciful Heaven!

WALTER FÜRST (*to the father and the son*).

Children! my children!

STAUFFACHER.

God be thanked!

LEUTHOLD.

No wonder
Tell may boast. That shot of his will be told
When we are all forgotten.

RUDOLPH DER HARRAS.

It will be told
So long as the mountains stand upon the earth.

[*He gives the apple to the Governor.*

GESSLER.

By God! the apple's shot through the very core!
I must give his skill its due.

RÖSSELMANN.

The shot was good;
But woe to him who forced him thus to tempt
God's mercy!

STAUFFACHER.

Come to yourself, my friend; you have wrought
Your freedom like a man. You may go home.

RÖSSELMANN.

Go, take the mother back her son unharmed.

[*They lead him away.*

GESSLER.

Tell!

TELL (*turns back*).

What is your will, my lord?

GESSLER.

I saw you place
A second arrow in your belt: what meant you?
Nay, *I* marked you.

TELL (*hesitating*).

My lord, such is the custom
'Mong archers.

GESSLER.

That answer will not serve for me.
*You* know, Tell, the deed had another meaning.
Let me hear the truth: I'll warrant that your life
Is safe, whate'er it be. Why did you take
That second arrow?

TELL.

My lord, since on your word
You have assured my life, I'll tell you why:

[*He takes the arrow from his belt, and looks with fearful glance at the Governor.*

With that same arrow, if I had touched my child,
I would have pierced your heart; and then, by Heaven,
My aim should not have failed.

GESSLER.

Tell, that you should live
I gave the word of a knight, and I will keep it;
But since I know your mind, I will take care
To have you guarded well, where sun nor moon

Shall visit you; and where, from henceforth, I
May live without fear and danger from your arrows.—
Guards there, seize him! bind him! [TELL *is bound.*

STAUFFACHER.

My lord, and can you dare
So treat a man that has, by the visible aid
Of God, been rescued?

GESSLER.

Let's see if again
He'll save himself; carry him to my boat;
I'll follow him, and guard him myself to Küssnacht.

RÖSSELMANN.

You *dare* not—even the emperor dare not do it:
'Twould violate the charters of our freedom.

GESSLER.

Where are they? has the emperor confirmed them?
No, he has not! Such favours are deserved
Before they are granted. Rebels are ye all,
Devising mutiny 'gainst your rightful lord.
I know you, and your ill intents; and take
One as example from the midst of you.
Let those who are wise be silent and obey.

[*He leaves the place;* BERTHA, RUDENZ, HARRAS, *and Attendants follow;* FRIESSHARDT *and* LEUTHOLD *remain behind.*

WALTER FÜRST (*bitterly*).

Alas, 'tis hopeless! He is intent to bring
To ruin me and my whole house.

STAUFFACHER (*to* TELL).

Oh, why
Did you provoke his tyranny so far?

TELL.

None could contain such misery as mine.

STAUFFACHER.

Oh, now all, all is hopeless! We are bound
With you, and captive.

PEOPLE (*surround* TELL).

With you departs our last
Sad hope of safety.

LEUTHOLD.

I pity you, Tell,
Yet must obey.

TELL.

Farewell!

WALTER TELL (*clinging to him with the deepest grief*).

Oh, father, father!
My own dear father!

TELL (*lifts his arms to heaven*).

*There* dwells thy Father:
Call on Him!

STAUFFACHER.

Tell, is there aught that I can say
To your wife?

TELL (*presses the boy earnestly to his breast*).

The boy is safe: God will help *me!*

[*Then turns abruptly away, and follows the soldiers.*

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## ACT IV. SCENE I.

*Eastern shore of the Lake of Lucerne. High, rugged, fantastic cliffs to the west, close in the prospect. The lake is disturbed, the waves rush and foam violently, while thunder and lightning follow each other in quick succession.*

KUNZ VON GERSAU, FISHERMAN, *and* BOY.

KUNZ.

All has happened as I told you. I saw it—
Doubt it not.

FISHERMAN.

Tell bound, and carried to Küssnacht—
The best man in the land—the bravest arm,
If once we strike for the cause of freedom!

KUNZ.

The Governor carries him across the lake.
All was prepared for their embarkment ere
I left Fluellen. But the storm which forced
Me to land here may have delayed them also.

FISHERMAN.

Tell taken captive! in the emperor's power!
Oh, he'll be buried deep, where light of day
Will never visit him. Well he may fear
The just revenge of him on whom he laid
Such fearful proof of tyranny.

KUNZ.

The lord
Of Attinghausen, too, they say will die:
He lies upon his deathbed.

FISHERMAN.

With him is lost
The latest anchor of our hopes; for he alone
Dared lift his voice for the freedom of his country.

KUNZ.

The storm grows higher. Farewell! I shall find lodging
Here in the village for to-night. To-day
No farther passage may be thought of. [*Exit.*

FISHERMAN.

Tell taken captive! Attinghausen dead!
Lift up thy daring brow, O Tyranny,
And cast all shame aside! The lips of truth
Are still; the pitying eye is blind; the arm
That should have saved us, bound in chains!

BOY.

Father!
Come in; the hail falls fast;—come to the house;
Stay not without in the midst of all this storm!

FISHERMAN.

Rage, rage, ye winds! flame down, ye fearful lightnings!
Clouds, burst asunder! streams of heaven, pour forth
Your floods, and desolate the land! destroy
The germ of every unborn creature! Elements,
The earth is yours—reign on, and take your fill!
Ye savage beasts, ye bears and wolves, who once
Possessed those ancient forests, come again,—
The earth belongs to you; for who would live
Here without freedom?

BOY.

Hark how the whirlpool boils
Within the gulf! the lake ne'er raged till now
So fearfully.

FISHERMAN.

To aim at his own child! the like
Was never yet required of a father.
And nature, in wild fury, doth rebel
Against such mandate. I should marvel not
If the wild rocks should bow into the lake—
If every peak and every icy tower,
Which ne'er has moved or melted in the sun
Since the day that God first fixed them on their seats,
From their high rocky summits should melt down—
If every mountain should be rent in sunder,
And a second deluge pour its avenging floods,
And swallow up the abodes of living men! [*A sound is heard.*

BOY.

Hark! a bell is ringing on the mountain!
Surely there is a ship in sore distress,
And the bell rings that we may pray for her.
[*He goes up the cliff.*

FISHERMAN.

Woe to the bark that's rocked in such a cradle!
Here is the rudder useless as the pilot;
The storm has taken the power unto itself;
The winds and waves play in wild sport with men;
No port of safety is there, far or near;
With hard inhospitable front they stand,
And frown upon him with their cold stone breasts.

BOY (*looking over the left side of the lake*).

Father, there's a ship from Fluellen, hither bound.

FISHERMAN.

Now, God help those she carries! If the storm
Touch her within our bay, 'twill rage as wild
As beast of prey that beats against the bars
That cage it in, and, howling, seeks in vain
Some means of freedom; for around us rocks
Do hem us in on all sides—high as heaven
They rise on either side of the rugged pass.

[*He ascends the cliff.*

BOY.

It is the Governor's ship from Uri, father:
I know it by the red deck and the flag.

FISHERMAN.

All-righteous God! 'tis true—'tis he himself—
The Governor! There sails he on, with the weight
Of all his crimes. Oh! quickly has the arm
Of the Avenger found him. He has now
A Lord above him stronger than himself.
These waves obey him not; these rocks
Will bow not at his bidding. Boy, pray not:
Seek not to still the arm of the Avenger!

BOY.

I pray not for the Governor: I pray
For Tell, who is with him in the vessel.

FISHERMAN.

O savage rage of the wild elements!
Must, then, in order that the guilty perish,
The innocent be plunged into their doom?

BOY.

See, see! they have passed the Buggisgrat in safety;

But the wild storm that foaming hurries down
The Teufelminster, now has thrown them back
Upon the Axenberg: I see them not.

FISHERMAN.

The Hackmesser lies close, upon whose crags
So many a ship has wrecked. Oh, it must need
The steadiest eye and skill to round the point,
Or the vessel will be dashed to pieces.—
On board is one good steersman. Tell would save
The bark if it could be saved; but he is bound
From head to foot.

WILLIAM TELL (*with a crossbow*). *He comes with quick steps, looks round bewildered, and shews the most intense emotion. When he is in the midst of the scene, he throws himself down, lays his hands upon the earth, and then lifts them towards heaven.*

BOY (*remarks him*).

Look, father! who is that man
Who kneels yonder?

FISHERMAN.

He clings unto the earth,
And seems as he were beside himself.

BOY (*comes forward*).

Father,
Come hither! come quick, and see!

FISHERMAN (*approaches*).

Who is he?
God in heaven!—what, Tell!—How come you here?
Speak!

BOY.

Were you not upon the ship yonder,
Bound and a prisoner?

FISHERMAN.

Bore they not you
To Küssnacht?

TELL.

I am free.

FISHERMAN *and* BOY.

Free! by a miracle!

BOY.

How came you here?

TELL.

From the ship yonder.

FISHERMAN.

What?

BOY (*at the same time*).

Where is the Governor?

TELL.

On the waves.

FISHERMAN.

Is't possible?
But you—how came you here? how escaped you
Your fetters and the dangers of this storm?

TELL.

Through God's good providence. Attend.

FISHERMAN *and* BOY.

Speak! speak!

TELL.

What chanced in Altdorf you have heard?

FISHERMAN.

I know
All. Say on!

TELL.

That by the Governor's order
I was seized and bound with chains, on the way
To prison at his castle at Küssnacht—

FISHERMAN.

And you from Fluellen did embark with him—
We know all. Speak! how came you here?

TELL.

I lay
In the ship with cords fast bound, disarmed, a man
Given up and cared not for. I hoped to see
The pleasant light of the sun no more—no more
The faces of my wife or children. Sadly
I looked out on the watery waste.

FISHERMAN.

O grief!
I marvel not thou mournedst.

TELL.

So we went—
The Governor, Rudolph der Harras, and a few
Attendants: my quiver and my crossbow lay
Astern, beside the steersman; when, hard by
To the little Axen, as we cleared the point,
God ordered it that such a fearful storm
Should burst from the foaming mouth of the Gotthardt,
That all the rowers gave up hope—their hearts
Sank, and they looked for death. Then heard I one
Of the Governor's servants turn to him and speak—
"You see your fearful strait and ours, my lord,
And that we stand upon the brink of death,
And that the pilot—so great his fear is—
Knows not what course to take; nor of this side
Of the lake on which we are driven knows he well
The rocks or coasts. But Tell is here, whose arm
Is strong and his eye clear—a skilful steersman—
How if we seek his aid in this our peril?"
Then spoke the Governor to me: "Tell, if thou
Wilt undertake to help us from the storm,
So I will loose thee from thy bonds." But I
Thus answer made: "My lord, by the help of God
I undertake to guide the vessel through."
So I was loosened from my bonds, and stood
And steered, yet looked I sideways, where my bow
And arrows lay; and on the shore I marked
Where was a spot on which I might spring out;
And when I neared a reef of rock that juts
Out in the lake some distance—

FISHERMAN.

I know it—
It is the foot of the great Axen; but yet
It were not possible that on its crag
You from a ship could leap.

TELL.

To the crew I cried—
"Let all work hard until we reach the rocky place;"
Then said—"The worst is past." And silently
I did commend my soul to God's protection;
And then, with all my power and strength, pressed
The stern of the ship against the rocky reef;

Then seizing my bow and arrows, swung myself
Upon the flat of the rock, with all my might
Pushing with my foot the vessel back. The waves
Rolled high, but the storm abated. There fare she
As God wills! I from the wild fearful storm,
And from the still worse wrath of man, am safe.

FISHERMAN.

Tell, Tell! a visible miracle the Lord
Has wrought in you! scarce trust I my own senses.
But say — what think you now to do? Safety
Is not for you if the Governor survive
The storm.

TELL.

I heard him say, when I lay bound
In the ship, that he would land at Brunnen,
And carry me to his castle beyond Switz.

FISHERMAN.

Goes he by land?

TELL.

He thinks so.

FISHERMAN.

Then lie you hid;
Not twice will God rescue you from his hand.

TELL.

Tell me the nearest way from Arth to Küssnacht.

FISHERMAN.

The public way leads over Steinen; a shorter,
Less-frequented one, my boy can shew you —
Over Lowertz.

TELL (*gives him his hand*).

May God reward your goodness!
Farewell! [*He goes, and returns a minute afterwards.*
Have you sworn upon the Rootli?
I think they named me to you.

FISHERMAN.

I was there,
And took the oath of the confederates.

TELL.

Then go to Burglen, for the love of heaven!

My wife expects me—tell her I am free,
And safe from danger.

FISHERMAN.

To what place shall I say
You are fled?

TELL.

Her father you will find with her,
And others who have sworn upon the Rootli.
Bid them be of good courage—Tell is free,
And his arm strong—soon shall they hear of him.

FISHERMAN.

What would you do? Open your heart to me.

TELL.

If it is *done*, you will hear of it. [*Exit.*

FISHERMAN.

Jeuni,
Shew him the road, and God be with you both!
He will succeed, whatever he attempt. [*Exeunt.*

## SCENE II.

*The Castle of Attinghausen.*

*The* BARON *in a high armchair dying*, WALTER FÜRST, STAUFFACHER, MELCHTHAL, *and* BAUMGARTEN, *round him.* WALTER TELL *kneeling before the dying man.*

WALTER FÜRST.

'Tis over—he is departed.

STAUFFACHER.

He lies
Not as the dead—the breath still plays around
His lips; his sleep is peaceful, and a smile
Of joy steals o'er his face.

[BAUMGARTEN *goes to the door and speaks with some one.*

WALTER FÜRST (*to* BAUMGARTEN).

Who is it?

BAUMGARTEN (*returns*).

Hedwig,
Your daughter. She comes to speak with you, and see
Her boy.

WALTER.

Can I give comfort? I *have* none.
Must every sorrow fall upon my head?

HEDWIG (*enters wildly*).

Where is my child? let me—I *must* see him.

STAUFFACHER.

Be calm, for you are in the house of death.

HEDWIG (*seizes hold of the boy*).

My Walter! my God, he lives!

WALTER (*clings round her*).

Poor mother!

HEDWIG.

Oh, tell me—is it *certain*—art thou safe?
[*She looks at him with anxious attention.*
Oh, is it possible? *Could* he aim at thee!
How could he! Oh, he has no heart! he dared
Not else have aimed an arrow at his child.

WALTER FÜRST.

He did it with sore anguish—his soul was rent
With pain. He was compelled, at the price of death.

HEDWIG.

Had he a father's heart, ere he had done it
He would have died a thousand deaths!

STAUFFACHER.

Blame not
Your husband, but thank God that He hath given
Him grace to spare his son.

HEDWIG.

Can I forget
What *might* have been? O God of heaven! lived I
A hundred years, my boy would stand before me,
And I should see the father aim, and feel
The arrow pierce my heart!

MELCHTHAL.

You know not how
The Governor taunted—dared him to the deed.

HEDWIG.

Oh, cold and merciless heart of man! If once

His pride be hurt, he cares for nought beside,
But casts within the cruel power of chance
The head of his own child, the mother's heart!

BAUMGARTEN.

Is not the fate of your husband hard enough,
But you with such harsh blame embitter it?
Have you no feeling for *his* sufferings?

HEDWIG.

(*Turns herself to him, and looks at him with piercing eyes.*)
And have you only tears to mourn his sorrows?
Where were you when your friend, the noble Tell,
Was bound and taken captive? where was then
Your help? You saw—you looked on calm the while,
And let the deed be done. You suffered it—
Resisted not—but let your friend be led
E'en from the very midst of you. Would Tell
Have done the like? Stood he in pity still,
When at your back the Governor's horsemen came,
And in your front the foaming wave upheaved?
Oh! not with useless tears he pitied you,
But in the bark he sprang, his wife and child
Forgot, that he might save you.

WALTER FÜRST.

My daughter!
What would our strength avail, so few, unarmed?

HEDWIG (*throws herself on his breast*).

O father! and thou too hast lost him—all!
Our land has lost the noblest of her sons!
He sees not us, alas! we see not him!
God save his spirit from despair! To him,
Low in the fearful dungeon where he lies,
There comes no comfort—no one loves him there.
If he is sick!—and in the murky prison,
Where all is damp and gloomy as the grave,
He cannot fail to sicken!—as the rose
That blooms upon the Alps, and groweth pale
When carried to a denser air, there is
For him no life but in the light of the sun,
And in the pure free balsam stream that plays
Through heaven. In prison! his life is freedom;
In a dungeon's air he could not breathe.

STAUFFACHER.

Oh, rest,—
Be calm! think you we would not all, with heart,
With strength, unbar his prison?

HEDWIG.

Oh! without him
What is there you can do? While Tell was free,
Then there was hope, was help, was liberty!
For then had innocence a friend, and him
That was pursued a rescuer; for Tell
Saved, helped, avenged you all; but all your strength
United cannot rescue him. [*The* BARON *awakes.*

BAUMGARTEN.

Be still—he moves!

ATTINGHAUSEN (*raising himself*).

Where is he?

STAUFFACHER.

Who?

ATTINGHAUSEN.

He fails me: in my last hour
He has forsaken me!

STAUFFACHER.

He means his nephew:
Send out to seek him.

WALTER FÜRST.

We have sent. Comfort,
My noble friend, for he has found his heart:
He still is ours!

ATTINGHAUSEN.

Hath he confessed his birthright?

STAUFFACHER.

Yes, nobly! most nobly!

ATTINGHAUSEN.

Why comes he not,
That I may bless him ere I die? I feel
That my last hour is drawing near.

STAUFFACHER.

Not so:
This short sleep has refreshed you; your eye
Is bright.

ATTINGHAUSEN.

Pain is life, and that has left me.
Suffering with hope is gone. [*He remarks the boy.*
Who is that boy?

WALTER FÜRST.

He is my grandson, and is fatherless;
Oh, bless him ere you die!
[HEDWIG *sinks with the boy down before the dying man.*

ATTINGHAUSEN.

And fatherless
I leave you all. Alas! that my last glance
Should see the glory of my country set,
Its freedom dying. Have I, then, lived out
The farthest span allowed us, but to die
When hope itself has perished from the earth?

STAUFFACHER (*to* WALTER FÜRST).

Let him not sink in this dark cloud of sorrow;
We yet can cheer his latest hour with one
Bright ray of hope.—My noble lord, lift up
Your head—your heart; we are not quite forsaken;
We are not lost beyond all hope, all help.

ATTINGHAUSEN.

Who is there that can save you?

WALTER FÜRST.

We ourselves!
Throughout the cantons we have sworn to expel
The tyrants from our land; the covenant
Is sealed by a solemn vow we dare not break.
Before the new year dawns 'twill be fulfilled!
In a free land your ashes shall be laid.

ATTINGHAUSEN.

Oh, tell me! is the covenant confirmed?

MELCHTHAL.

On the same day will the three cantons rise;
All is prepared; the secret has been kept,
Though many hundreds share it; the earth beneath
The tyrants' feet is hollow, and the days
Are numbered of their reign; soon shall they pass,
And not a trace remain where once they stood.

ATTINGHAUSEN.

But the castles of the Governor's?

MELCHTHAL.

They fall
On the same day.

ATTINGHAUSEN.

Have the nobles joined your league?

STAUFFACHER.

Their countenance we look for in good time;
As yet our sworn allies are peasants only.

ATTINGHAUSEN (*with great astonishment; he raises himself up with difficulty*).

Has, then, the peasant ventured such a deed
By his own efforts and resolve, nor aid
Been sought or given of the nobles? Has he
His own strength trusted in so far? Then we
Are needed not; we may in comfort lie
Within our graves, and think that there will live,
When we are dead, the priceless gem of freedom—
That it will be upheld by other hands
Than ours. [*He lays his hand upon the head of the child, who kneels before him.*
From thee, and such as thee, shall spring
A better freedom. Times are changed: old things
Are dead, and new life blooms from out their ruins.

STAUFFACHER (*to* WALTER FÜRST).

See! what a light is beaming in his eyes!
Not like the pallor of departing life;
It is the beam that ushers in new day.

ATTINGHAUSEN.

The noble from his castle-halls descends,
And swears with citizens a patriot's oaths:
In Uechtland, and in Thurgau, it is done;
And noble Berne has lifted high its head;
And Freyburg is a city of the free;
Zurich has armed her citizens, a band
Resolved to conquer, and the might of kings
Dies conquered at her walls.

[*He speaks in the tone of a seer; his voice rises to inspiration.*

Princes I see,
And noble lords, advance in glittering armour,
To carry arms against an innocent race
Of peasants and of herdsmen! For their life
They fight, and dread and bloody is the struggle:
The herdsman rushes on, with naked breast,
A willing victim, on the lances' points;
He breaks their bands—the blood of nobles falls—
The banner of our freedom waves on high!

[*Seizing* WALTER FÜRST *and* STAUFFACHER'S *hands.*

Oh! hold you firm together—firm for ever;
Let not freemen be strangers; let all towns
That are free in concert act:—upon your hills
Let watch-towers stand, and summon all
To act with one heart, in one cause—be free,
And act in unity!

[*He falls back on the cushion, holding their hands in his;* FÜRST *and* STAUFFACHER *look at him a long time in silence, then they turn away, overcome with grief. In the mean while the servants have pressed in; they approach with signs of silent or violent grief; some kneel down by him, and weep upon his hand. During this silent scene the castle-bell tolls.*

RUDENZ (*to the standers-by, rushing in hastily*).

Lives he? Oh, tell me,
Can he hear me yet?

WALTER FÜRST (*turning away his head*).

You are our baron now:
This castle bears another name.

RUDENZ (*he looks upon the corpse with the most violent grief*).

Good God!
Comes my remorse too late? Could he not live
A few brief pulses more, until he saw
His kinsman's heart was changed? Oh! I despised
His faithful voice while yet he walked in light!
He is gone hence for ever, and has left
The heavy, monstrous weight of all my crime
Unreckoned and unpaid! Oh, say how died he?
Departed he in anger? left he me
No single word of blessing or forgiveness?

STAUFFACHER.

He heard, in dying, what you had done, and blessed
Your noble words.

RUDENZ (*kneels beside the dead*).

Yes, holy shade! dear form
Of my blest guardian, that all soulless lies!
I swear before thee—in thy death-cold hand
I clasp my warm and living hand, and swear
That I will live from henceforth with my people;
That I have rent apart all foreign ties;
That, as I am born in Switzerland, my heart
Shall bleed, my arm shall fight, for her! [*Standing up.*
Yes, grieve!
The friend, the father of us all is dead!
But sink not in despair; 'tis not his lands,
His title only, that have fallen to me,—
I have inherited his noble heart;
And my fresh youth shall study to perform
His will in your behalf. Give me your hand,
My father! give me yours! and, Melchthal, yours!
Oh, turn ye not away! believe ye not,
Receive ye not, my promise and my oath?

WALTER FÜRST.

Give him your hand; his altered heart deserves
His country's trust.

MELCHTHAL.

Our rights you cared not for;
You sought to injure us. How can we trust you?

RUDENZ.

Oh, think not of the error of my youth!

STAUFFACHER (*to* MELCHTHAL).

Act with one heart, and be united. He
Who was our father left for us these words—
Think on them now.

MELCHTHAL.

Here is my hand, my lord;
And the grasp of a peasant's hand is as his word—
The word of a brave man, that cannot fail.
What were the nobles without us? our rank
Is ancient as your own.

RUDENZ.

I honour it:
My sword shall fight in its defence.

MELCHTHAL.

The arm
That can subdue the hard and stubborn earth,
And make it fruitful, shall not fail to guard
Its rights against the foe.

RUDENZ.

You shall guard mine,
And I will fight for yours; so are we both
Strong in each other's strength. Yet why hold thus
Vain words of contest, when our native land
Lies in the hands of foreign tyranny?
When once the foe is banished from our land,
Then will we reconcile our hasty thoughts.

[*After a moment's pause.*

You are silent—have you nought to say to me?
Have I deserved not yet that you should trust me?
Unbidden, then, I press within your bound,
And share the secret of your covenant.
You have sent forth and summoned to the Rootli
Your sure confederates, and there have bound
Yourselves unto a solemn oath of freedom.
All that you did is known to me; and though
You granted not to me your confidence,
I kept it as it were a holy pledge.
I never was my country's foe, and ne'er
Against you have I wrought in word or deed.
But wrong was your delay—time presses on,
And needs swift act. Tell had been still with us,
Had you, when first you bound yourselves by oath,
Begun the struggle for your country's freedom.

STAUFFACHER.

Until the Christmas feast we swore to wait.

RUDENZ.

I was not with you, and I have not sworn.
*You* may delay, but *I* will act.

MELCHTHAL.

How! will——

RUDENZ.

The lands that were my father's, now are mine;
And my first duty is to guard their safety.

WALTER FÜRST.

To give these honoured ashes to the dust
Must be a yet more near and holy duty.

RUDENZ.

When we have freed our country, we will lay
A crown of victory upon his bier.
Oh, comrades, not your cause alone have I
To fight for 'gainst the tyrants! Hear and know,
That by the arts of some most daring villain
The lady Bertha has been stolen from us.

STAUFFACHER.

Such deed of violence hath the tyrants dared
Against the noble of our land?

RUDENZ.

My friends,
I spoke to you of help, and swore to grant
To you my heart's best blood; but yours, alas!
I must first crave. Snatched from me—torn away
And hidden God knows where—my Bertha lies!
With cruel arts, perchance, they force her hand
To some most hated nuptials! Heaven alone
Can tell what fearful lot she suffers now!
Forsake me not! Oh, help me to her rescue!
She loves you: she deserves that every arm
Should rise with eager love to do her service.

WALTER FÜRST.

What would you do?

RUDENZ.

Alas, my heart knows not!
In the dread darkness that hangs round her fate—
In the perpetual pangs of this dread doubt,
Through which I can lay hold of nothing sure,
One thing alone is clear unto my soul—
Amid the ruins of the tyrant's power
Lies the sole chance of rescuing her I love.
Their strongholds must be levelled with the dust,
If we would fain redeem their innocent prey.

MELCHTHAL.

Haste—lead us on—we follow you; leave not
Till the morn dawns what we can do to-day.
When we upon the Rootli met, this deed
Of wickedness had not been done, and Tell
Was free: fresh time brings other laws, and who
So weak as now to faint?

RUDENZ (*to* STAUFFACHER *and* WALTER FÜRST).

In the mean while
Be armed and ready for the work; expect
The signals on the mountains. Quicker far
Than a boat's sail can fly you will receive
The message of our victory, and see
The welcome watchfires kindled on the heights,
In token that the hour is come,—when, strong
As storm from heaven, we burst upon the foe,
And break the yoke of tyranny for ever. [*Exeunt.*

## SCENE III.

*A hollow pass near Küssnacht. The road leads down between the rocks; and before they appear on the stage, travellers are seen on the heights. Rocks close-in the scene on every side: on one in the foreground is a projecting point covered with low trees.*

TELL (*with his crossbow*).

Through this high gulley must he pass,
There is no other way to Küssnacht. Here
Will I commit the deed for which I came.
The place is suited to the act: the trees
Will shield me from the view, and there is space
Through which my messenger can seek its aim;
The narrow path will hinder followers.
Make up thy account with heaven, lord Governor!—
Thou must go hence—thy last sands are run out.
Oh! I lived calm and harmless, and my prey
Was the wild deer that dwelt within our forests:
My thoughts were free from violence, until thou
Didst steal the gift of peace from out my heart,
And changed the milk of human thought and feeling
Into foul poison. To harsh thoughts, which ne'er
Till thou didst teach them me my soul e'er knew,

Hast thou inured me. He who struck the aim
From the head of his own child, oh, shall he not
As surely strike to the life-blood of his foe?
My poor, my innocent children, my loved wife,
Must I protect 'gainst thee, lord Governor.
There, when I drew my bow, and my hand trembled,
And thou with devilish joy compelledst me
To aim at the head of my own child,—when I,
All-powerless, sank before thee,—then I swore
A fearful oath—breathed to the ear of God,
And not of man—that my next arrow's aim
Should be thy heart. What in that hour I swore
Of deadly agony, I will perform;
God will require it at my hands—to Him
I breathed my oath.
Thou art, my lord, placed here in my emperor's stead;
Yet never had the emperor allowed
Such deeds as thou hast done. He sent thee here
To deal out justice to our land. Severe,
Perchance, he knew thou wert, for 'twas in wrath
He sent thee; but he did not bid thee slake
Thy murderous thirst for blood on harmless men.
But there is One who shall avenge our cause.
O come, then, forth, thou messenger of pain!
My dearest treasure now, my highest good!
The heart that did resist all pious prayers
Shall not have power to resist thy point!
And thou, my trusty bow-string, in good stead
Thou oft hast served till now in joyful sports,—
Forsake me not in this most fearful earnest;
Hold firm for one aim more, and wing aright,
As thou só oft hast done, my pointed barb;
For if it play me false, I have no other
To fill its destined part. [*Travellers pass over the stage.*
Upon this stony bank will I sit down,
'Twas placed for the repose of travellers;
For here there is no dwelling; each one goes
With careless step, nor heeds the fellow-men
Who pass him by, nor thinks if they are well
Or ill—if joy or sorrow rest with them.
The careful merchant, pilgrims with few goods,
Few cares, the pious monk, the dark grim robber,

The merry player, and the carrier
Who comes from other lands with laden beasts—
From every region of the world do men
Pass by this road, t' accomplish each his work—
Mine is a work of death! [*He sits down.*
Oh! once, my children, there was joy for you,
When from the chase your father late returned!
For never came he to his home but brought
Something for you—either a flower he'd plucked
From off the Alps, or some rare bird, or Ammon's horn,
Such as the travellers find upon the hills.
Far other, deadlier object now he seeks:
On the wild way he sits with vengeful thoughts—
It is his enemy's life for which he waits—
And yet e'en now his thoughts are but of you,
His children. To guard you, and your gentle innocence
To shield against the tyrant's rage—he draws
His bow, such fearful murder to commit! [*He stands up.*
It is a noble prey for which I wait.
The hunter oft beneath the coldest skies
Will leap from crag to crag through the whole day,
And climb the rugged precipice oft stained
By the drops of his own blood, and weary not,
So he can strike his prey; but here
I have a far more noble prize—the heart
Of my dread foe, who seeks to ruin us.

[*Joyful music is heard—gradually approaches in the distance.*

From my first childhood have I been inured
To feats of archery; my bow has been
Constant companion of my life; to the goal
I oft have shot, and many a fair prize
Have I brought home from feasts where archers meet.
But the master-shot of all to-day I seek,
And carry the best prize that's to be won
Throughout the whole wide circle of the Alps.

[*A wedding-procession passes over the stage and through the narrow pass;* TELL *watches it, leaning on his bow;* STÜFFI *the ranger joins him.*

STÜFFI.

That is the overseer from the cloisters
At Mörlischachen; he's taking his bride home;

He is a rich man, and has, upon the Alps,
Above ten pasture-lands. From Imisee
He fetched his bride; and there will be to-night
High festival at Küssnacht. Come you along,
For every honest man is welcome there.

TELL.

A sorrowful man suits not the marriage-feast.

STÜFFI.

A truce to grievances — to the winds with them!
And take what happens. The times are hard, and men
Must be content to take what comes, — to-day
Is merriment, the morrow may bring mourning.
Here is a wedding-feast; to-morrow's sun
Shines on a funeral.

TELL.

'Tis like —

STÜFFI.

Ha! so the world goes now: ill luck
Is every where. An avalanche has fallen
On the land of Glarner; beneath it lies
One half of Glärnisch.

TELL.

What! do the mountains shake?
Nothing stands firm upon the earth!

STÜFFI.

Neither
Are here alone seen prodigies. I spoke
With one who came from Baden:—To the king
A knight went forth on horseback; on the way
A swarm of hornets seized upon his steed,
And he, from anguish pierced, sank dead to the earth;—
The rider came on foot unto the king.

TELL.

Even harmless beasts do suffer for men's deeds.

[ARMGART *enters with children, and stands at the entrance of the pass.*

STÜFFI.

Such fearful and unnatural deeds do point
At some most dread disaster to our land.

TELL.

The like each day are wrought—no miracle
Is needed to declare them.

STÜFFI.

Well for him
Who rests in peace upon his fields, and sits
At home unvexed and in content.

TELL.

The best
Of men cannot remain in peace at home,
If the wicked seek to vex him.

[TELL *looks with restless expectation to the height of the pass.*

STÜFFI.

Farewell!
You wait, perchance, for some one?

TELL.

Ay, I do.

STÜFFI.

A prosperous journey to you: you are from Uri?
Our gracious lord, the Governor, goes there
To-day.

A TRAVELLER (*passing*).

Expect ye not the Governor to pass:
The floods are abroad from the great rains; the streams
Are swollen, and have broke down the bridges.

[TELL *stands up.*

ARMGART (*comes forward*).

The Governor comes not!

STÜFFI.

Seek ye him?

ARMGART.

Ah! yes.

STÜFFI.

Why place yourself right in his way, in the pass?

ARMGART.

Here he *must* listen to my prayer.

FRIESSHARDT (*rides hastily through the pass, calling, on the stage*).

Make way—
Way for my gracious lord, the Governor!

Do you hear? let the road be cleared; he's close
Behind! [*Exit* TELL.

ARMGART (*eagerly*).

The Governor comes!

[*She goes with her children into the front part of the scene;* GESSLER *and* RUDOLPH DER HARRAS *appear on horseback, at the height of the pass.*

STÜFFI (*to* FRIESSHARDT).

How forded you
The streams? they said the bridges were washed away.

FRIESSHARDT.

We had too big a storm upon the lake
To fear your little mountain-streams, my friend.

STÜFFI.

You were on board in the midst of the storm?

FRIESSHARDT.

That were we. To my dying day——

STÜFFI.

Stay, tell us!

FRIESSHARDT.

I stay not here; I go to tell at Küssnacht
The arrival of the Governor. [*Exit.*

STÜFFI.

Had honest men been on board the ship, the waves
Had swallowed her; but fire nor water harm
Such men as these. [*He looks around him.*
Where is the huntsman gone
With whom I spoke? [*Exit.*

GESSLER *and* RUDOLPH DER HARRAS *on horseback.*

GESSLER.

Say what you will, I am the emperor's servant,
And I must act what part will please him best.
He has not placed me in this land to flatter
The ill-will of the people, and to speak
Soft words to them—he expects obedience.
Which, think you, should be master in this land,
The emperor or the peasant?

ARMGART.

Oh, now—
Now will I speak to him! [*She approaches timidly.*

GESSLER.

I set not up
The hat in Altdorf for a jest, or e'en
To prove the people's hearts, for well I knew
Their rebel disobedience long before:
I did it that their proud necks they might learn
To bow to me; and this unwelcome pole
I planted in their path, that, as they went
That way, they might salute it with their eye,
And so remember me, their rightful lord.

RUDOLPH.

Yet have the people certain rights.

GESSLER.

No time
Is this to measure or assert them. Things
Are at work which will have influence
On future ages: the imperial power
Will rise and flourish—what the sire began
The son with equal glory will lead on
Until it gain more perfect consummation.
This petty nation lies upon our path,
A stone almost too small to need regard,
But yet, by Heaven, it shall be overthrown!

[*They are going on, when* ARMGART *throws herself down before the Governor.*

ARMGART.

Mercy, Lord Governor! Grace! grace!

GESSLER.

Away!
Back from the path: why hinder you the road?

ARMGART.

My husband is in prison, my children cry
For bread. Have mercy, mercy, my dread lord,
And pity our great misery!

RUDOLPH.

Who are you?
Who is your husband?

ARMGART.

A poor labourer, sir;

He gathers the wild grass on Rigisberg,
That grows upon the precipices, where
The cattle even dare not browse.

RUDOLPH.

By God,
A sad and pitiable life! My lord,
I pray you set your prisoner free, e'en though
He may have bitterly offended you—
His daily task were punishment enough.—[*To the woman.*
You shall have justice. Hither to the castle;
Make there your prayers—for this is not the place.

ARMGART.

No, no, I move not from the earth; I'll kneel
Until the Governor sets my husband free!
Already for six months he has lain in bonds,
Waiting in vain the sentence of his judge.

GESSLER.

What! think you to compel me? Woman, away!

ARMGART.

Hear me, Lord Governor, in this our land
Thou art judge, in the emperor's stead and God's;
Fulfil thy duty, and if thou dost hope
Justice from God, so grant it to our people.

GESSLER.

Hence! Take these insolent beggars from my sight—
Away!

ARMGART (*seizes the horse's bridle*).

No! I have nothing more to lose:
Thou goest not from this place, Lord Governor,
Until thou givest me right. Ay, knit thy brow
And roll thine eyes, we care not for thy wrath;
We are so wretched that not even thou
Canst do us farther wrong.

GESSLER.

Woman, give place!
My steed shall else ride over thee.

ARMGART.

I care not—
Let it go over me. Here—

[*She drags her children to the earth, and throws herself down with them on his way.*

—Here I lie
With these my children: let thy horse's hoofs
Press on their innocent heads—'tis not the worst
That thou hast done.

RUDOLPH.

Woman, thou art mad!

ARMGART (*crying more earnestly*).

Long time
Our land thou hast crushed beneath thy feet. Alas,
I am a poor weak woman—else, methinks,
I should know better what to do than lie
Here in the dust!

[*The music is again heard indistinctly from the heights of the pass.*

GESSLER.

Where are my servants? Ho!
Drag her away, lest I forget myself, and do
Some deed I may repent of.

RUDOLPH.

My lord,
Your servants cannot pass yon wedding-train.

GESSLER.

Too mild a ruler am I to this people;
Their spirits are too free,—but I make vow
That it shall soon be otherwise. By Heaven,
I'll break their bearing proud, and make them learn
The meaning of submission—their mad thirst
For liberty I'll crush. I'll—

[*An arrow strikes him. He puts his hand to his heart, and sinks down. In a faint voice.*

God have mercy on me!

RUDOLPH.

Lord Governor—God! what is that! whence came it?

ARMGART (*starting up*).

He reels—he sinks. Ha! he is shot to the heart!

RUDOLPH (*springs from his horse*).

O God, 'tis fearful! bethink yourself, sir knight,
You are in the hands of death—Oh, call on God!

GESSLER.

That shot was Tell's!

[*He falls down from his horse into the arms of* RUDOLPH DER HARRAS, *and is laid upon the bank.*

TELL (*appearing on the height of the rocks*).

Thou art right—'twas mine.
Free are our homes, and innocence is free.
Thy tyranny shall no more spoil our land.

[*He disappears from the height, the people press round.*

STÜFFI (*the foremost*).

What is the matter—what has happened here?

ARMGART.

The Governor is shot to the heart.

THE PEOPLE (*rushing in*).

Who?

Who has been shot?

[*While the first of the bridal party come on the stage, the last of the train are still on the height, and the music proceeds.*

RUDOLPH.

The blood is falling fast—
Away, seek help! pursue the murderer!
O wretched man, is this thy wretched end?
Ne'er wouldst thou listen to my words of warning.

STÜFFI.

O God, he lies there pale!—he does not breathe!

MANY VOICES.

Whose hand hath wrought the deed?

RUDOLPH.

The people are mad,
Bid them be still. Should music celebrate
A murder?

[*The music breaks off suddenly, and more people come in.*

Lord Governor, speak, if still
You may—have you nought more to trust me with?

[GESSLER *makes a sign with his hand, which is not understood: he repeats it with violence.*

What do you mean? where would you that I went?
To Küssnacht? Oh, I comprehend you not.

Yet grieve not much for that. Leave things of earth,
And seek to reconcile yourself with Heaven.

[*The whole of the wedding procession surround the dying man in senseless horror.*

STÜFFI.

See how pale he is! Now death has reached his heart;
His eyes have lost their sight; his life is gone.

ARMGART.

See, children, how the wicked die!

RUDOLPH.

Women, away!
Have ye no heart, that thus ye feast your eyes
Upon a sight so wretched? Seek ye not
To help a dying man? to staunch his blood?
Why pluck ye not the arrow from his breast?

WOMEN (*move away*).

We will not succour him whom God hath slain.

RUDOLPH.

God's curses be upon you! [*Draws his sword.*

STÜFFI (*holds his arm*).

Venture not—
My lord, your power is at an end; the tyrant
Of the land has fallen,—henceforth we suffer
No farther violence; we are *free* men!

ALL (*tumultuously*).

The land is free!

RUDOLPH.

Fear and obedience,
Do they die so soon?— [*To the soldiers who enter.*
Ye note the dreadful deed
Of murder that's been done—help is in vain,
And vain it were to seek the wretch whose hand
Hath wrought the deed: and other cares press on us—
Haste, haste to Küssnacht, that we may yet save
The emperor's fortress. All is disorder
And wild rebellion—every bond
Of duty and of peace is broken loose,
And no man's word is to be built upon.

[*Whilst he goes out with the soldiers, six monks, Brothers of Charity, appear.*

ARMGART.

Room!
Room! for the holy Brothers of Charity.

MONKS OF THE ORDER OF CHARITY (*they form a circle round the dead, and sing in a deep tone*).

Death with quick step steals on our way —
No time for shrift, no parting prayer;
He calls to us — we may not stay;
He drags us from the sunbright air —
He drags us with his icy hand:
Prepared or not, this earth we leave,
Before our mighty Judge to stand,
His righteous sentence to receive.

## ACT V. SCENE I.

*Open place in Altdorf. In the background, to the right, the dungeon of Uri, with the scaffolding still standing as it was in the third scene of the first act; to the left are mountains, upon whose summits are seen signal-fires. It is just daybreak, and bells are heard on various sides in the distance.*

RUODI, KUONI, WERNI, *the* MASTER STONEMASON, *and peasants; also women and children.*

RUODI.

Mark ye the beacon-fires upon the mountains?

MASTER STONEMASON.

Hear ye the sound of bells?

RUODI.

Our enemies
Are conquered!

MASTER STONEMASON.

Their strongholds are o'erthrown!

RUODI.

And shall we men of Uri still endure
This mark of tyranny upon our land?
Are we the last to call our country free?

MASTER STONEMASON.

Shall the yoke stand, 'neath which we were to bow?
Let us not suffer it.

ALL.

Down! down with it!

RUODI.

Where is the mayor of Uri?

MAYOR.

Here. What would you?

RUODI.

Go to the watch-tower; blow your horn, that so
Its sound, fast spreading o'er the hills, may wake

A thousand echoes in the rocky cliffs,
And call the mountaineers to arms. [*Exit the* MAYOR OF URI.

*Enter* WALTER FÜRST.

WALTER FÜRST.

My friends,
Hold back a while; we have not yet heard news
Of what is done in Unterwald and Switz.
Let us first wait the messengers.

RUODI.

Why wait?
The tyrant of our land is dead: the day
Of freedom dawns.

MASTER STONEMASON.

On every mountain-top
A flaming messenger is sent to bring
Tidings of victory,—why wait for more?

RUODI.

Come all—come hand in hand: men, women, children;
Down with the scaffoldings! tread in the arches!
Down with the walls, till not one stone remain
Upon another!

STONEMASON.

Comrades, our hands have raised;
Shall not our hands have power to destroy?

ALL.

Ay, and far more;—our hearts are in the cause!
[*They press on all sides round the building.*

WALTER FÜRST.

The gates are burst. I cannot hold them back.

*Enter* MELCHTHAL *and* BAUMGARTEN.

MELCHTHAL.

What! Stands the castle here, while Rossberg lies
Felled to the earth, and Sarnen is in ashes?

WALTER FÜRST.

Ha, Melchthal! do you bring good tidings? Say,
Are the cantons free?

MELCHTHAL (*embraces him*).

Yes! not an enemy
Treads our free earth. Rejoice, my honoured father,

For in the moment that we speak, no tyrant
Breathes in the pure free air of Switzerland!

WALTER FÜRST.

Oh, say by what bold chance you overthrew
The fortresses.

MELCHTHAL.

With the most noble skill
And bravery, the Baron Rudenz gained
The heights of Sarnen: the walls of Rossberg I
Had scaled by night. Yet hear what happened:
When we had cleared the castle from the foe,
And the red flames rose gloriously to heaven,
Then rushed Diethelm, the page of Gessler, forth,
And cried, "The lady of Bruneck perishes!"

WALTER FÜRST.

Just God! [*The falling of the scaffolding is heard.*

MELCHTHAL.

The page spake truth; 'twas she herself,
Secretly guarded by the Governor's orders.
Rudenz rushed forth as he were mad. We heard
The beams and the pillars fall, and through the flames
The wailing cry of the dying lady came.

WALTER FÜRST.

But she was saved?

MELCHTHAL.

Yes, thanks to speed and boldness.
Were he our baron only, we had loved
Perchance our lives too well. But he had sworn
Our oath of freedom, and the lady loved
Our rights, our people; so we rushed, to death
It seemed, to seek her mid the flames.

WALTER FÜRST.

You saved her?

MELCHTHAL.

Yes, she is safe: Rudenz and I together
Did drag her from the flames—behind us fell
The crackling rafters of the roof. And now,
When first she saw that she was saved, and raised
Her soft blue eyes to heaven, then Rudenz fell
Upon my breast in gratitude, and we swore

A silent oath of friendship, which shall last
While life itself remain—it was refined
Like some choice metal in the raging fire,
All lesser ordeal it shall stand unmoved.

WALTER FÜRST.

Where is the Governor?

MELCHTHAL.

Far over Brunig—
Oh, blame not me, that he who snatched away
My father's eyesight should go hence unharmed.—
I sought for him,—I stopped him in his flight,—
I dragged him to my father's feet, and held
My sword above his head; but when he prayed
For mercy, his blind victim gave him life;
He swore Urphede* never to return.
And he will keep it; for, by Heaven, he felt
The power of our arm.

WALTER FÜRST.

And it was well
That you stained not the conquest with his blood.

CHILDREN (*carrying broken pieces of the scaffolding across the stage*).

Long live our freedom! We are free! are free!

[*The loud sound of the horn of Uri is heard.*

WALTER FÜRST.

Ha! 'tis a feast-day, that the youngest child
Will tell of to the last day of his life.

[*Young maidens bring in the hat, carried upon a pole: the whole stage is filled with people.*

RUODI.

Here is the hat to which they made us bow.

BAUMGARTEN.

*We* are masters now; what shall be done with it?

WALTER FÜRST.

Heavens! 'neath this pole my grandchild stood.

MORE VOICES.

Destroy the relic of the tyrant's power—
Let it be burnt.

* An oath of subjection to an enemy, and a promise never more to return to his land.

WALTER FÜRST.

No; it shall be preserved.
It was the tool of tyrants,—it shall be
Th' eternal sign of freedom!

[*The people, men, women, and children, stand or sit down upon the broken beams of the scaffolding, grouped together in a picturesque half-circle.*

MELCHTHAL.

Thus we stand
Rejoicing in the ruins of tyranny;
And gloriously is the oath fulfilled
Which short time since we swore upon the Rootli.

WALTER FÜRST.

The labour is begun, not ended; we have need
Of courage and firm union to the cause:
The king will not delay to seek revenge
For the death of Gessler, nor to establish fresh
The Governors you have driven from the land.

MELCHTHAL.

Let him come with all his force; we fear him not.
Now we have once driven out our foes, small strength
Will keep them back.

RUODI.

The passes of the hills
Are few, and through their high and narrow defiles
The foe no entrance to our land shall find,
Save o'er the bodies of our conquered slain.

BAUMGARTEN.

We are united by eternal bonds,
Which promise victory,—we fear not his hosts.

*Enter* RÖSSELMANN *and* STAUFFACHER.

RÖSSELMANN (*entering*).

It is the fearful judgment of the Lord!

PEOPLE.

What is it you speak of?

RÖSSELMANN.

In what times we live!

WALTER FÜRST.

Say on. What is it that has happened? Werner,
Welcome! What brings you here?

PEOPLE.

What news, what news?

RÖSSELMANN.

Listen, and shudder at my fearful tale.

STAUFFACHER.

Scarce had we heard the news of Gessler's death—

RÖSSELMANN.

The emperor is murdered.

WALTER FÜRST.

O God!

[*A tumult among the people; they press round* STAUFFACHER.

ALL.

Murdered!

What? The emperor!

MELCHTHAL.

It is not possible!

How heard you it?

STAUFFACHER.

'Tis certain. He is dead.
The Emperor Albert fell 'neath a murderer's hand—
An honest man, Johannes Müller, brought
The news from Schofhausen.

WALTER FÜRST.

Who dared commit
A deed so fearful?

STAUFFACHER.

Yet more fearful is it
When you hear all. This crime was wrought by the hand
Of his own brother's child, John, duke of Suabia.

MELCHTHAL.

What drove him to such deed of parricide?

STAUFFACHER.

The emperor kept his patrimony back,
Which he impatient claimed, being then of age:
They say he looked to keep his goods himself,

And satisfy his nephew with a mitre.
However that may be, the youth gave heed
Unto the wicked counsel of his friends—
The noble lords of Eschenbach—of Palm,
Of Tegerfeld, and Von der Wart—and since
The rights he prayed for were denied,—he took
With his own hand deep vengeance on his kinsman.

WALTER FÜRST.

But say, how was the deed accomplished?

STAUFFACHER.

The emperor rode down from Stein to Baden
Towards Rheinfeld, to the palace; with him went
The princes Hans and Leopold, and a train
Of high-born gentlemen. And as they came
Upon the Reus, by the public ferry,
The murderers pressed in tumult to the ship
To separate the emperor from his train.
Then as the prince rode with him through a field
On which a city stood in ancient days,
Just where the castle of Hapsburg is in sight,
In former times the mansion of his race,—
There the duke plunged a dagger in his throat;
Rudolph of Palm thrust in his side a lance;
And Eschenbach so struck his head in twain,
That he fell weltering in his blood, nor spoke
Nor moved—by his own kindred murdered,
Upon his native land, and in his kingdom.
Those on the other shore beheld the deed,
But 'twixt them ran the stream, so they could give
No means of speedy aid; they could but raise
A powerless cry of horror and of woe:
But on the way there sat a peasant woman,
And on her breast the emperor bled to death.

MELCHTHAL.

An early end hath his ambition gained;
He grasped at every thing, and found a grave!

STAUFFACHER.

Deep fear and horror reign throughout the land;
Every defile and mountain-pass is sealed;
And all the city-gates are closed, even Zurich's,

Which have stood open now for thirty years.
All fear the murderers, and yet more the hand
Of the avenger: armed with the holy bann
Comes Agnes, the proud Queen of Hungary,
Who never yet hath known the tenderness
Or softness of her sex,—the royal blood
Of her slain father to avenge; and she
Hath sworn destruction against all who count
Them kindred with the murderers — children
And children's children, serfs, ay, e'en the stones
That lift their castle-walls. To her father's grave
She hath sworn whole generations shall go down,
And that their blood shall stream upon the land
As 'twere May dew.

MELCHTHAL.

Where are the murderers?

STAUFFACHER.

They fled so soon as e'er the deed was done,
And separated in five different roads,
To meet no more in this world: on the mountains
They say Duke John is wandering.

WALTER FÜRST.

Their deed
Hath borne them, then, no fruit! Revenge
Ne'er beareth fruit; it feeds upon itself:
Murder and death take part in the foul banquet.

STAUFFACHER.

The murderers have won nothing by the deed;
But our hands, free from the dread crime, may reap
The harvest it will yield. From our worst fears
Are we set free: the greatest foe to freedom
Is now o'erthrown for ever; it is said,
The sceptre will depart from Hapsburg's house,
And that the right of election rests with us.

WALTER FÜRST AND OTHERS.

Were any named to you?

STAUFFACHER.

Most voices speak
In favour of the Count of Luxemburg.

WALTER FÜRST.

Well for us that we stood faithful to the realm:
Now may we hope for justice.

STAUFFACHER.

Our new lord
Will have need of brave friends,—for his own good
Will he shield us against Austria.

[*The people embrace each other.*

*Enter* SACRISTAN, *with an imperial Messenger.*

SACRISTAN.

Here are the chiefs of Switzerland.

RÖSSELMANN AND OTHERS.

What would you?

SACRISTAN.

A courier brings these letters, sealed and signed
With the royal hand and seal.

ALL (*to* WALTER FÜRST).

Break them and read.

WALTER FÜRST (*reads*).

"Unto the men of Uri, Switz, and Unterwald,
The Queen Elizabeth sends greeting."

MANY VOICES.

What
Would the *queen* of us? Her reign is over.

WALTER FÜRST (*reads*).

"In the great anguish of a widow's pain,
Wherein the bloody murder of her lord
Hath placed the queen, she doth remember yet
The ancient faith and love of Switzerland."

MELCHTHAL.

She thought not of it in her prosperous days.

RÖSSELMANN.

Silence, and hear what follows. Sir, read on.

WALTER FÜRST (*reads*).

"And she doth hope from this her faithful people
That it will shew a just and true abhorrence
Unto the actors in this fearful crime;
And not alone that they will not give aid
Unto the murderers, but will lend their hand

To give them up into the power of justice,
Remembering well the ancient love and favour
Which they from the line of Rudolph have received."

[*Signs of discontent among the people.*

MANY VOICES.

Favour and love!

STAUFFACHER.

Ha! it is true we met
With favour from the father; but the son
Ne'er granted us our rights. The charters e'en
Of freedom, which all emperors before
Have granted us, he ne'er confirmed, and ne'er
Gave heed to our prayers and tales of our distress.
He judged us not with justice, nor relieved
The oppression of our innocent cause. Not one
Of all these duties has the king fulfilled;
And had not we ourselves, with our own hand,
Won justice for our land, he ne'er had given
One thought to aid us. Gratitude to him!
The seeds of gratitude he did not sow
Within our valleys; on his high proud throne
He sat afar from us. He might have been
A father to his people, yet he cared
But for his own. Let those he favoured
Lament him in his death.

WALTER FÜRST.

Over his fall
We will not triumph, nor remember now
The ill we have received: far be it from us!
Yet that we should revenge the death of him
Who never did us good, and injure those
Who never harmed us, hardly were our duty.
Love must be free—it cannot be constrained
To sacrifice itself; and death, from service forced,
Releases us for ever.

MELCHTHAL.

Doth the queen
Weep in her lonely chamber tears of woe?
And doth she weary Heaven with her wild grief?
See! from the eyes of a now happy people,
Teardrops, but not of pain; they look to Heaven

In thanks for wrath averted. He that reaps
The sorrow of his people, in their hearts
First sows the seeds of love.

[*Exit the imperial messenger.*

STAUFFACHER (*to the people*).

Tell is not here!
Shall he alone, the founder of our freedom,
Be absent when that freedom reasserts
Its proud supremacy and glorious rights?
The noblest deed of all was wrought by him.
Come, then, come all, unto his house, to bless
And hail him as our brave deliverer. [*Exeunt omnes.*

## SCENE II.

*Tell's house. A fire burns on the hearth. The open door shews the country beyond.*

HEDWIG, WALTER, *and* WILHELM.

HEDWIG.

Your father comes to-day, children, dear children!
He lives, is free, and all the land is free.
It is your father who has saved his people.

WALTER.

And I too helped him, mother; you should say
What I did for it too: my father's arrow
Went near to take my life, and yet I shrank not,
Nor trembled when he shot.

HEDWIG (*embraces him*).

Yes, thou art given
Once more into my arms: a mother's pangs
Twice have I borne for thee; but now 'tis past—
All pain is past; I have you both—have both!
Your father will come back to-day, my children!

[*A Monk appears at the door.*

WILHELM.

See yonder, mother, stands a pious monk;
He would ask alms of us.

HEDWIG.

Go, bring him in,
That we may give him food: he has reached the house
Of joy. [*She goes in, and returns again with a cup.*

WILHELM (*to the Monk*).

Come in, good monk, and rest yourself.

WALTER.

Come in, and we will give you food and drink.

MONK (*looking fearfully around him*).

Where am I? in what country?

WALTER.

Know you not?
Are you a stranger that has lost his way?
You are in Bürglen, sir, in Uri; the road
Which runs by here takes you to Schächenthal.

MONK (*to* HEDWIG, *who returns*).

Are you alone? Is not your husband here?

HEDWIG.

I wait him now: but wherefore do you ask?
You look not up, as he who brings good tidings
Or beareth a good heart: but whosoe'er
You be, you are needy; take, and eat and drink.
[*She offers him the cup.*

MONK.

Howe'er my sinking frame may faint for food,
Yet nothing may I eat, nor slake my thirst,
Until your words assure——

HEDWIG.

Touch not my dress,
And come ye not so near; stand farther off,
If you would have me hear and heed your words.

MONK.

By this bright fire, that burns with friendly light,
And by your children's innocent heads, on which
I lay my hands—— [*He lays his hands on them.*

HEDWIG.

Man, what would you say? Come not—
Lay not your hand upon my children's heads!
You are no monk! Peace dwells in a monk's garb;

But on your face there is a tale which tells
That peace dwells not with you.

MONK.

Of all men
I am most unhappy.

HEDWIG.

The unhappy speak
Unto the heart, and make it pity them;
But your voice makes me shudder.

WALTER (*springing up*).

Mother, my father! [*He hastens forth.*

HEDWIG.

O my God!
[*She would go after him, but she trembles and stops.*

WILHELM (*runs to meet him*).

My father!

WALTER.

Thou art here again!

WILHELM.

Father, dear father!

TELL.

Yes, I am here once more. Where is your mother?
[*They enter.*

WALTER.

There stands she at the door: she cannot move,
So trembles she between her joy and fear.

TELL.

O Hedwig! Hedwig! mother of my children!
By God's grace have we met: no tyrant more
Shall ever part us.

HEDWIG (*her arms clinging round his neck*).

O Tell! my husband!
Words cannot speak the agony my heart
Has felt for thee! [*The Monk listens attentively.*

TELL.

'Tis past: forget it now;
Let it not touch our present happiness.
I am here once more—stand once more on my hearth,
Among *my own.*

WILHELM.

Where is thy crossbow, father?
I see it not.

TELL.

Thou ne'er wilt see it more;
'Tis laid within a holy shrine: no more
Will it serve me in the chase.

HEDWIG.

O Tell!
[*Draws back, and lets fall his hand.*

TELL.

What ails thee, dearest wife?

HEDWIG.

Alas, how comest thou
Back to thy home? This hand, dare I to touch it?—
This hand, O God!——

TELL.

Has guarded you, has saved
Our country: freely, proudly, do I dare
To lift it unto heaven. [*The Monk makes a quick movement: he looks at him.*
Who is that monk?

HEDWIG.

Ah! I thought not of him. Speak you with him;
His voice makes my heart shudder.

MONK (*comes nearer*).

Are you that Tell
By whom the Governor was slain?

TELL.

I am:
From none would I conceal the deed.

MONK.

Then here
Hath God directed me, and led my steps
Unto your dwelling.

TELL (*measures him with his eyes*).

You are no monk; that dress
Is but disguise: what is your name?

MONK.

You slew
The Governor, who did you wrong; and I—
I have slain one who would not do me right.
He was your enemy no less than mine.
I have rid the land of him.

TELL (*starting back*).

You—O horror!
My children, go within; go, my dear wife.
Unhappy one, you are——

HEDWIG.

My God! who is he?

TELL.

Ask not; away; let not the children hear;
Go from the house—far, far; you may not dwell
'Neath the same roof together.

HEDWIG.

Alas! alas!
What is it? Come, my children.
[*She goes with the children.*

TELL (*to the Monk*).

You are the Duke
Of Austria. What seek you here of me?
You have slain your uncle and your sovereign.

DUKE JOHN, THE PARRICIDE.

He robbed me of my heritage.

TELL.

Your uncle,
Your emperor, have you slain! and yet
The earth still bears your guilt! the sun from heaven
Still lights your way!

PARRICIDE.

Tell, hear me ere——

TELL.

Dare you
To stand upon my pure and sacred hearth,
Dripping with blood, stained with the deadly crimes
Of parricide and regicide? Dare you
To come within the abodes of honest men
To ask their hospitality?

PARRICIDE.

From you
I hoped to find compassion; for your hand,
As mine, took vengeance on its foe.

TELL.

Think'st thou,
Unhappy man, to justify thy guilt?
From the blow a father dealt, in life's defence,
Ambition's bloody crime is far removed
As is this earth from heaven. *Thou* didst not strike
To shield *thine own* from outrage, to protect
Thy sacred hearth—the worst, the last dread fate
T' avert from those thou lovest, and thyself.
To heaven I lift my unstained hands, and curse
Thee and thy deed. I but avenged the ties
Of outraged nature: thou hast cast them off.
Nothing have I in common with thee; for thou
Hast slain thy kindred,—I have guarded mine.

PARRICIDE.

You plunge me in still deeper misery, and thrust
Me from you in despair.

TELL.

I shudder while
I speak with you. Go, wander forth; pursue
Your way: leave pure the home of innocence.

THE PARRICIDE (*turns away as if to go*).

I cannot, will not bear this weary life!

TELL.

And yet I pity thee. God of heaven! so young,
Born of so fair a race, grandson of Rudolph—
The murderer of my lord and emperor—
Here at a poor man's threshold in despair,
Praying for aid, a wretched fugitive!
[*He hides his face with his hand.*

PARRICIDE.

Oh! if you ever wept, let my sad fate
Now win compassion from you. None e'er felt
Such misery as mine. I am a prince—
Or rather was. I might have lived in peace
If I my impatient wishes had restrained;

But envy gnawed my heart. I saw the youth—
My cousin Leopold—with honour crowned,
With land rewarded. I, of like age with him,
Was held a slavish ward.

TELL.

Unhappy man!
Your uncle wisely judged in keeping back
Your lands and goods. This mad and wicked crime
Which you have wrought has justified the deed.
Where are thy bloody partners in the murder?

THE PARRICIDE.

Where'er the spirit of revenge has led them;
I have seen them not since that unhappy hour.

TELL.

Knowest thou that thou art outlawed, and proclaimed
An enemy to the state?

PARRICIDE.

Therefore I wander
Through unknown solitary ways; nor dare
To knock at the door of any house or cabin.
Unto the wilderness I turn my steps;
Shuddering, I have wandered o'er lone mountain-tops,
And if a brook by chance has crossed my way,
At my own image have I started back,
In horror at the sight. Oh, if you feel
Or pity, or humanity— [*He falls down before him.*

TELL (*turning away*).

Arise,
Unhappy one!

PARRICIDE.

Never till you have stretched
Me forth your hand in pity and in aid.

TELL.

How can I help you? Can a man of sin
Make light the burden of your guilt? Yet rise.
What though you have stained your hands with such black crime,
You are still a man—I am your fellow-man.
From Tell shall no one part without some words
Of comfort. What I can, that will I do.

PARRICIDE (*seizing his hand with eagerness*).
Tell, you have saved my spirit from despair!

TELL.
Let go my hand. You must depart from hence,
For here you may not undiscovered stay,
And if discovered none may shelter you.
Where can you go? where hope you to find rest?

PARRICIDE.
Alas! I know not.

TELL.
Hear, then, what God for you
Doth say unto my heart. Go to the land
Of Italy—the city of St. Peter;
There cast yourself before the Pope, and make
Confession of your guilt, and save your soul.

PARRICIDE.
Oh! will he not deliver me to those
Who seek my life?

TELL.
Whate'er he does, that take
As if from God.

PARRICIDE.
How shall I reach the land?
I know it not—the way is strange to me;
I dare not join with other travellers.

TELL.
I will point out the way to you. Mark well!
Follow the current of the river Reus,
Which in wild course flows downwards from the hills.

PARRICIDE (*shuddering*).
By the Reus lies my path! Its waves flowed near;
It saw the deed.

TELL.
Your way lies o'er the abyss;
And many a cross stands there to mark the spot
Where 'neath the snow some traveller lies buried.

PARRICIDE.
Could I but tame the torments of my heart,
'Mid nature's horrors I would stand unmoved.

TELL.

At every cross fall down, and with hot tears
Repent of your dread crime. If you pass
In safety all the perils of the road
Until you come unto the bridge, beneath
Whose rocky chasm the torrent wildly flows,
Then sweep the dust upon it as you go;
And if it breaks not down beneath your guilt,
But you pass by in safety, you will find
A black gate in the rock, on which the sun
Has never shone. Through this the way leads down
Into a happy vale; this with quick steps
You pass, for peace is not for you.

PARRICIDE.

O Rudolph,
My royal ancestor, from out thy realms
Thus must thy grandson fly!

TELL.

Then move you on,
Ever ascending, till you reach the height
Of Gotthardt, where the everlasting lakes
Lie, filled by the streams of heaven. There take you leave
Of the land of Germany; another river,
With gently flowing course, will lead you down
Into the land of Italy, to you
The promised land. [*The Ranz des Vaches is heard blown from many Alpine horns.*
Hark! I hear voices—
Hence!

HEDWIG (*hastens in*).

Where art thou, Tell? My father comes, your friends,
And all your sworn confederates.

PARRICIDE (*conceals his face with his dress*).

Alas!
I may not stay with the happy. I go forth
Alone.

TELL.

Go, my dear wife. Give this man food
And wine; lade him with gifts; his way

Is long, and he will find no shelter. Haste,
For they come!

HEDWIG.

Who is he?

TELL.

Ask not; and when
He goes turn thou thine eyes away, that thou
Even the way he taketh mayest not know.

[*The Parricide goes up to* TELL *with a hasty movement, but he makes a sign to him to go. When both are gone at different sides, the scene changes.*

## SCENE LAST.

*The whole space between* TELL'S *house and the mountains which close it in is filled with people, who stand in groups together. Some are still seen coming to the place over a mountain-path, some up the valley of the Schachen.* WALTER FÜRST, *with both the boys,* MELCHTHAL, *and* STAUFFACHER *come forwards; others press after them. As* TELL *comes into the midst, they receive him with loud shouts of joy.*

ALL.

Long live our Tell, protector of our land!

*Whilst those nearest to* TELL *press round and embrace him,* RUDENZ *and* BERTHA *appear.* RUDENZ *greets the peasants, and* BERTHA *embraces* HEDWIG. *Meanwhile music is heard on the mountains.* BERTHA *comes into the midst.*

BERTHA.

Companions, friends, receive me 'mongst yourselves.
My happy life to spend upon these vales
I do intend; my shield shall be your freedom.
In your brave hands I lay my cause; to you
I look for my defence: say, shall I look
In vain?

PEOPLE.

We will defend you unto death.

BERTHA.

I thank you! Thus, free maiden of your land,
I give my hand unto this noble youth,
Who will protect your freedom, as you his.

RUDENZ.

My serfs and vassals from this hour are free!

[*Whilst the music breaks forth anew, the curtain falls.*

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